Imam Muhammad Shirazi

What is Islam?

Beliefs, principles and a way of life

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Contents

Translator's note

(a) This is a translation of *Ma-huwa 'l-Islam?* from its 3rd printing in Beirut in 1414/1993. The book was first published in mid 1960's.

(b) In the transliteration of Arabic words I have generally followed current academic usage but I have, however, deliberately avoided macrons and diacritics which might only confuse the non-specialist, (hence al-Rida, without a dot beneath the *d*, which would indicate one of the letters which have no parallel in English). Also, the Arabic letter (written like the emphatic *ta'* with a dot), I have rendered as *dh* but solely as a compromise: hence Kadhim, dhuhr (noon), 'adhim (great), since Kazim, zuhr and 'azim without diacritics give little idea of the correct pronunciation.

The *ta' marbuta* at the end of a word is rendered by an *a* not *ah*, as, for instance, *balagha* not *balaghah*, except in a construct when it is written as a *t*, e.g. *ma'rifat Allah*. The Arabic letters *hamza* and *'ayn* throughout are rendered by (') and (') respectively.

(c) The holy cities of Mecca and Medina are rendered according to their original Arabic: Makka and al-Madina, respectively.

(d) The Arabic text has a few footnotes. These were not the work of the author. I have revised them, sometimes adding to them as well as adding new footnotes of my own.

(e) In references from the Holy Qur'an, the number of the *sura* (chapter), in italics, precedes that of the *aya* (verse).

(f) Whenever the author mentions Imam Amir al-Mu'minin, he is referring always to 'Ali ibn Abi Talib.

(g) Where two dates are given, the Hijri (Islamic) date precedes the CE (Common Era) one: i.e. the current year would be rendered 1422/2002.

NB Throughout this book, *man* and the pronoun *he* refer to *mankind* in general (men and women) and frequently translates the Arabic *insan*. This is to avoid the tedious repetition of *he/she* and so on. Similarly Muslim/the Muslims, as in Arabic, refers to Muslim men and women in general.

Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Muhammad al-Husayni al-Shirazi

(1928-2001)

A biographical sketch

Grand Ayatollah Muhammad al-Shirazi, who died in Qum on 17 December 2001 at the age of 73, was one of the most prominent Muslim scholars and spiritual authorities (*maraji'*, sing. *marja'*) of modern times.

He was a direct descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) and his genealogy can be traced back through Zayd "al-Shahid", a son of the fourth imam of the Ahl al-Bayt, Imam 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin. For more than a century and a quarter the Shirazi family, so called because of the long association of their ancestors with the city of Shiraz in south-western Iran, have played an outstanding role as religious scholars (*'ulama'*, sing. *'alim*) jurists and *maraji'*. A famous member of the family is Mirza Muhammad Hasan Shirazi, known as *al-Mujaddid* ("the renewer") because of his outstanding learning, who played a leading role in the so-called "Tobacco Rebellion" of 1890-1. His son Mirza 'Ali Agha was also a *marja'*. Another Shirazi and a leading *marja'* Mirza Muhammad Taqi, the maternal uncle of Ayatollah Shirazi's father, was, along with his son Muhammad Rida, in the vanguard of the revolt of 1920 against the British occupation of Iraq. A brother-in-law of Ayatollah Shirazi's father, Mirza 'Abd al-Hadi al-Shirazi, was an *'alim* and well-known poet who became a *marja'* briefly after the demise of Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Burujirdi in 1961.

Sayyid Muhammad was born in Najaf in Iraq in 1928. He was the son of the renowned *marja'* Grand Ayatollah Mirza Mahdi al-Shirazi. His mother was Alawiyya Halima, a distant cousin. At the age of nine, the family moved to Karbala', 50 miles to the north. There at the Hawza (Religious Academy, plur. *hawzat*) he went through the various stages of the traditional education necessary in order to become a *mujtahid* (one competent to make independent juridical decisions). Among his principal teachers at the highest stage called *Bahth al-Kharij* numbered his own father, and the Grand Ayatollahs Sayyid Muhammad Hadi al-Milani (the future renowned *marja'* of Mashhad in Iran), Shaykh Muhammad Rida al-Isfahani, Shaykh Muhammad al-Khatib and Sayyid Zayn al-'Abidin al-Kashani. The young Sayyid Muhammad excelled in his studies to such an extent that before he had reached the age of 20 he had become a *mujtahid* (one competent to make independent juridical decisions) and, not yet 30,

he began to teach *Bahth al-Kharij*. After his father's death, in February 1961, he published his own collection of juridical edicts (his *risala ‘amaliyya*), a necessary step if one wishes to be a *marja‘*, and soon afterwards he was recognised as one. Not long after the Ba‘th Party had gained supreme power in Iraq, the first of the *‘ulama’* to be arrested for their outspoken criticism of the regime was Shirazi's brother Ayatollah Sayyid Hasan who, in the spring of 1969, was imprisoned in Baghdad and savagely tortured. After his release Sayyid Hasan fled to Lebanon (where a decade later he was assassinated by the Iraqi regime) and Sayyid Muhammad, forced into exile, left Karbala' along with his family for Kuwait. In 1979 he moved to Qum in Iran.

Shirazi has written more than 1000 works. These deal with every branch of Islamic studies. His greatest scholarly contribution is perhaps in the field of *fiqh* (jurisprudence). Up to his time the most popular work on *fiqh* in the *hawzat* was Najafi's *Jawahir al-Kalam* in 44 volumes which dates from the early 19th century. Shirazi's monumental encyclopaedic work on *fiqh*, which he commenced when only 25, amounts to 150 volumes, all of which have been published. For the first time subjects like the environment, economics, politics, freedom, the system of government in Islam have been studied using strictly the criteria of jurisprudence. Shirazi believed in the concept of an Islamic State governed by a consultative system of leadership (*shura*). Since he also encouraged freedom of expression and favoured political pluralism he was against a one-party state. He eschewed violence and coercion calling vehemently for a policy of non-violence to be exercised in every aspect of life: private and public. Shirazi maintained that Islam was essentially a message of peace and tolerance to all mankind, stressing that it was better to forgive one's enemy rather than vilify him or seek revenge. Shirazi promoted the institution of marriage and traditional family values; was concerned for human rights and the dignity of the individual, whether Muslim or non-Muslim; emphasized the concept of justice, which is a fundamental one in Islam, and the need to have special care for the environment. His house in Qum became in effect a Hawza where *‘ulama’* and students alike would come to attend his lectures in *Bahth al-Kharij*. Shirazi had followers throughout the world, especially in Kuwait, the Gulf States, the Eastern Province of Saudi Arabia, Europe, the UK and North America.

Ayatollah Shirazi was buried in the mausoleum of Fatima Ma‘suma (a sister of the eighth Imam, ‘Ali Rida) in Qum. He is survived by his wife who bore him 6 sons and 6 daughters.

Shirazi had always encouraged outstanding *mujtahids* to publish their own *risala ʻamaliyya*. Among these *mujtahids* figured his own brother, Sayyid Sadiq. During his lifetime Shirazi, both orally and in writing, had urged the believers to have recourse to Sayyid Sadiq and to profit from his knowledge in all aspects of jurisprudence but the latter had declined to publish his *risala* out of deference to his elder brother. However, now after the demise of Sayyid Muhammad it has surprised no one that Sayyid Sadiq should be recognised as a *marjaʻ*, bearing in mind that his late brother had made it clear that he was eminently qualified for this great task.

Grand Ayatollah Sayyid Sadiq al-Shirazi was born in Karbala' in January 1942 and among his teachers were the Grand Ayatollahs, his own father Mirza Mahdi, his brother Sayyid Muhammad, Sayyid Muhammad Hadi al-Milani and Shaykh Muhammad Rida al-Isfahani. He became a *mujtahid* in his early twenties and for over 20 years he has taught *Bahth al-Kharij* and many well-known *mujtahids* of the present-day had attended his lectures.

Sayyid Sadiq has already written more than 80 compilations among which figure his commentary on the monumental work on *fiqh*, *al-ʻUrwa al-wuthqa*, by the late 19th century/early 20th century *marjaʻ* Sayyid Tabataba'i Yazdi. He began to write it in Karbala' 35 years ago and the first volume on *ijtihad* and *taqlid*, published in Beirut in the 1970s, illustrates admirably both the depth of Sayyid Sadiq's learning and his deductive powers. The remaining 20 volumes, on prayer, have yet to be published. His *Bayan al-usul* on the fundamentals of jurisprudence runs into 10 volumes and its fifth volume (*la-darar wa-la-dirar:* which is the Islamic principle that "one must do no harm or receive harm") has been published and has been printed at least three times. Grand Ayatollah Sadiq resides in the holy city of Qum from where he directs the affairs of the *Marjaʻiyya* and of course is in constant touch with his representatives worldwide. He is also busy teaching *Bahth al-Kharij* (higher studies) both in *usul al-fiqh* (fundamentals of jurisprudence) and *fiqh* and also gives public lectures on a whole range of topics. Daily, sitting in the same office that his brother used, he receives visitors who come to Qum to seek his advice and spiritual guidance or who ask for a fatwa in a particular juridical matter.

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London
August 2002

Foreword by the Author

Praise be to God the Lord of the Worlds and peace and blessings be upon Muhammad and his pure progeny and may God curse their enemies until the Day of Judgement.

In today's world we see that materialism has rushed in from all sides and spurious values prevail in every quarter and peace of mind and tranquillity now barely exist. Revolution and wars throughout the world have caused everyone to be apprehensive and people feel that they have been robbed of their security and sense of stability. Many are beginning now to seek a way-out from this state of anxiety and alarm which would bring them contentment and inner peace and are looking for a cure to this all-pervasive disease and a way to rid themselves of mental and spiritual pain and disquiet.

For a long time I have been thinking that if people only lived according to Islam as it has been revealed by the God of the Universe, they would find therein a complete cure which would remove every anxiety and unease and quench this thirsting for inner serenity. Islam is indeed a way of life, a religion of light, equanimity and peace, for the Almighty says in the Holy Qur'an: " …… when He calls you to that which gives you life" [*8*: 24] and speaks of those who follow "the light which has been sent down" [*7*: 157]. God Almighty also says: "surely by remembering God, hearts find rest" [*13*: 28] and in another *sura* (chapter), "With it [the Qur'an] God guides whomsoever follows His pleasure into the ways of peace" [*5*: 16]. Moreover Islam can cope with all the problems of life and indeed the Almighty says "He [Prophet Muhammad] makes lawful for them the good things and makes unlawful for them things which are bad and rids them of their burden and the fetters that were upon them" [*7*: 157].

However large numbers of Muslims are not aware of these things (and so what must be the case with those who are not Muslims?) and therefore suffer all this distress just like someone who lives on top of treasure but does not realize it and is in a state of hunger, misery and nakedness.

Thus it is essential to introduce people to Islam and perhaps this will lead them to accept it which means happiness in this world and the reward of paradise, whose breadth is the heavens and the earth, in the hereafter.

This is what induced me to write this little book *What is Islam?* (*ma-huwa 'l-Islam?*) and since my aim was merely to introduce Islam I have been succinct and concise throughout so that it can be easily read by all.

I pray God Almighty that it will meet His pleasure and that He will make it a means through which people are guided, for He it is who grants success and upon Him do we call for help.

The holy city of Karbala',

Muhammad

1-The Islamic Faith - an Introduction

Question:

What is Islam?

Answer:

Islam is both a faith and a legal system (*shari'a*) which provides for all the needs of a human being at every stage of his or her life.

Question:

Who established Islam?

Answer:

Islam did not come into being through human deliberation. On the contrary, it has been revealed by God Almighty as something perfect and complete without any defect.

Question:

Can Islam survive forever and is it valid for every time, place and nation?

Answer:

God Almighty has revealed Islam to be the faith of all mankind forever, relevant in every age, place and nation.

Question:

On whom was Islam revealed?

Answer:

God Almighty revealed Islam to the last of his prophets, the Prophet Mohammad (*sallallahu 'alayhi wa-alihi wa-sallam*, God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny).[1]

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[1] It is a mark of piety in Islam to use this salutation when mentioning the name of the Holy Prophet Muhammad. It is a similar mark of piety to use the greeting *'alayhi al-salam*, peace be upon him, on mentioning one of the other Prophets or one of the Imams from the Household (the Progeny) of the Holy Prophet, the Ahl al-Bayt. This practice has been followed throughout the book.

Question:

At what time did the Prophet of Islam live?

Answer:

He lived fourteen centuries ago, that is nearly five centuries after Jesus Christ (peace be upon him), and this present year, which is 1387/1967, one thousand and four hundred years have passed since Islam was established.

Question:

What is the difference between the Islamic faith, and the Christian, Jewish and other faiths?

Answer:

Religious systems that have been revealed by God Almighty are many, each of them being suitable for its own time, and whenever a new religion came the older faith would be abrogated. So is the case with Islam which is the last religion revealed by God for the guidance and leadership of mankind. It can be said that the difference between religions is similar to the difference between today's educational institutions: elementary school, secondary school and university in that as mankind advanced a new religious system would be revealed appropriate to the stage which had been reached, until the time came when Islam was proclaimed as the religion of mankind for all time.

All religions share the same common essence and their difference lies in details and certain characteristics which have developed according to the advancement of the human race.

Question:

Does Islam develop or not?

Answer:

Islam has two aspects:

1. The fixed and unchanging aspect of Islam in which there is no place for development, and in which if changes were to take place there would only be insanity and confusion. In this category falls the exhortation to the telling of the truth and trustworthiness; finding repugnant oppression and

miserliness; the prohibition of hoarding and murder; the obligation to pray and fast and to seek the consent of both parties in a sale or purchase and so on.

2. The second aspect of Islam is where change and alteration are legitimate. Islam has enunciated overall principles that can be applied to matters that undergo development. For example, means of transport have changed from four-legged animals to carriages and have then developed further to motorcars and trains, and then to aeroplanes and missiles. The means of lighting have gone from candle to oil lamps and from there to electricity and nuclear power. Islam allows such developments and in fact encourages them in all these spheres.

Question:

Is Islam sufficient for all man's needs? And how are those needs fulfilled?

Answer:

Islam is sufficient for all man's needs because it is a faith that God has revealed in such a manner that it can be applied to all aspects of life.

You ask, how can Islam be all sufficient? This is because the Holy Qur'an and the *sunna*[1] have set out two types of laws:

1. Laws which relate particularly to a specific issue such as forbidding the drinking of wine.
2. Laws which establish a general principle such as the one forbidding the imbibing of anything that intoxicates.

Question:

How can you say that Islam is sufficient for all man's needs seeing that now new matters and problems have arisen which are not mentioned in the Qur'an or *Sunna* such as banks or insurance? Such things did not exist at the time of the advent of Islam?

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[1] The words and deeds of the Prophet Muhammad and the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt.

Answer:

Since Islam is the Faith revealed by God for the guidance of mankind for all time and God is omniscient, Islam therefore enters into all man's affairs even those of recent manifestation. The two examples that you mentioned are also covered by general principles enunciated in Islamic Law.

Banking operations consist of various matters which have been dealt with by the *Shari'a* as, for instance, borrowing money, security on a loan and a transference transaction. Insurance is covered by the Qur'anic verse: "… except that it be trading by your mutual consent"[*4*: 29]. Elsewhere it is stated: "… fulfill [your] contracts"[*5*: 1]. These orders depend upon conditions that have been described in the books on Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*).

Question:

Why do we need Islam?

Answer:

Islam, as mentioned before, is a faith and *shari'a*.

Islamic faith is firstly the unchanging reality: one who does not believe in it has believed in something that is based on a fiction. Secondly, a great loss in the hereafter will be the lot of one who does not believe in Islam. Moreover, anyone not bound by the Islamic *Shari'a*, will not obtain true happiness in this world to say nothing of the punishments of the hereafter. Indeed the Islamic *Shari'a* is the best of all legal systems, better than man-made laws which also seek to improve man's lot at every stage of his life. In brief, the happiness of man in this world and the hereafter is conditional upon whether or not he has believed in Islam

Question:

Firstly, how do we know that after this life there is another existence called the hereafter and that the happiness of man depends upon whether or not he is a Muslim? Moreover, what is your proof that the Islamic *Shari'a* is superior to all laws and codifications and thus is able to deal best with man's condition, whereas other religions do not possess such capability?

Answer:

The proof of the existence of the hereafter after this world can be obtained from the arguments set out in the books of Islamic Philosophy (*kalam*). Similarly modern psychological fields of knowledge like magnetic hypnosis, hypnotism, spiritualism (recalling the spirits of the dead) and so on prove that after death the spirit remains eternal.[1]

Moreover, proof of the superiority of the Islamic *Shari'a* and its being better than all other laws and codifications can be seen by comparing how Islamic laws and all man-made legal systems deal with man's various needs.[2]

Question:

What is the total number of Muslims today in the world?

Answer:

The exact figure is not known, but according to statistics found in certain books and journals this figure is as high as "800 million".[3]

Question:

Where do Muslims live?

Answer:

There are Muslims in nearly all the countries of the world but the majority of them live in Asia and Africa.[4]

Question:

Are Muslims of the belief that their religion will finally become the religion of all the people on earth?

Answer:

Yes, Muslims are of the belief that their religion will become the religion of all those on earth and the time will come when there

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[1] Refer to other works by the author namely, *Al-'aqa'id al-islamiyya*; *Kayfa 'arafta 'llah* and *Hal tuhibb ma'rifat Allah.*

[2] Refer to *Al-tashri' al-jina'i al-islami* by 'Abd al-Razzaq 'Oda.

[3] This was the figure available in the 1950's. The figure today is more than 1.5 billion.

[4] Of course there are now large Muslim communities in Europe and North America.

will no longer be even one non-Muslim. The Qur'an has also promised the same and proclaims "that He may make it (Islam) prevail over all the religions"[*48*: 28].

In several *hadiths*[1] that have been quoted from the Prophet and the pure Imams, it has been made clear that at the end of time a man from the Prophet's descendants by the name of "Imam al-Mahdi" (peace be upon him) will appear and will consequently spread Islam throughout the whole world.[2]

Question:

How does Islam see this life? Is Islam a religion concerned for the material life or just about the spiritual life, or about both?

Answer:

The Islamic viewpoint about this life and the material and spiritual aspects of man's existence are summed up in the Almighty's words in the Qur'an where He says:

"And among them is he who says: 'O Our Lord! Give us in this world that which is good and in the hereafter that which is good, and save us from the torment of the Fire' "[*2*: 201].

The Prophet Muhammad (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) says: "One who renounces his worldly affairs for the life of the hereafter is not from among us, and one who renounces the life of the hereafter for his worldly affairs is also not from among us".[3]

He also says: "Strive for your world in such a manner as if you will live for ever and for the life of the hereafter act in such a way as if you will die tomorrow"[4].

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[1] A *hadith* is a statement or saying of the Holy Prophet Muhammad or of one of the Imams of the Ahl al-Bayt.

[2] See, for instance, *Kanz al-'ummal*, 'Ala' al-Din Al-Mutaqqi al-Hindi (d. 975/1567-8), Beirut, 1989 (16 vols.), vol. XIV, p. 271, *hadith* 38691: "The Day of Judgement will not occur before tyranny and aggression encompass the earth, then a man from my progeny will rise up and fill it with justice and equitableness just as it had been full of tyranny and aggression"; also see, p. 271, *hadith* 38692 and p.265, 38667.

[3] See *Wasa'il al-Shi'a* (*ila tahsil masa'il al-Shari'a*) by Muhammad b. al-Hasan al-Hur al-'Amili (d. 1104/1692-3), 20 volumes, Beirut,1983, vol.12, p. 49.

[4] See *Wasa'il al-Shi'a*, vol. 12, p. 49.

Question:

What were the boundaries of the Islamic World in the previous centuries and what are they at the present time? How did Islam spread?

Answer:

Information about these two topics requires extensive study of various books but a summary can be found by a perusal of the study of a map of the Islamic World and the book “Invitation towards Islam”.

2-THE BASIC BELIEFS OF ISLAM

Question:

What are the basic beliefs of Islam?

Answer:

There are three fundamental beliefs as well as beliefs that follow from these three fundamentals.

THE ONENESS and UNITY of GOD (*TAWHID*)

Question:

What are these three fundamental beliefs?

Answer:

Firstly, the faith that this world has an omniscient, omnipotent, wise, all-hearing and all-seeing God, who has no beginning or end and who possesses all qualities of perfection and is free from any fault or deficiency. This God is One and has no partner, and none of His creation resembles Him, and there is absolutely no possibility of seeing Him, either in this world or in the hereafter. The oneness of God can be proved.

Question:

What is the meaning of oneness?

Answer:

The oneness of God can be considered to have four aspects:

1-Oneness of Essence:

This means that God is one and has no partners. He is not like man who consists of several parts for God does not possess any parts at all.

2-Oneness of Attributes:

This means that God's attributes are identical to His essence: hence there is no duality between His attributes and His essence. In other words, God is not like man whose knowledge is separated from his essence and whose strength is something

separate from him, but in fact the essence of God, His knowledge, His power and so on are one and the same thing.

3-Oneness of His Works:

This means that everything in the universe is of His creation.

4-Oneness of Worship:

This means that only God Almighty has the right to be worshipped.

PROPHETHOOD

Question:

What is the second fundamental from among the fundamental beliefs in Islam?

Answer:

It is prophethood. This means that God Almighty has sent prophets to mankind in order to guide him to the truth and the right path.

Question:

Who is the first prophet?

Answer:

The first prophet is our father Adam (peace be upon him). God created him from clay; then created him a companion Hawa (Eve) - peace be upon her. Then God blessed Hawa with two sons Habil (Abel) and Qabil (Cain). Then God created two girls, not from the stock of Adam and Hawa, but as a new creation. Habil and Qabil married these two girls and from them children were created, and consequently cousins married each other and so the human race started to increase.

Question:

Who is the last of all the prophets?

Answer:

The last prophet is the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny).

Question:

How many prophets are there?

Answer:

Their number is 124,000. From among them are Nuh (Noah), Ibrahim (Abraham), Musa (Moses) and ‘Isa (Jesus). These four prophets together with the Prophet of Islam are superior to the rest of mankind.

Question:

What is the difference between prophets and other human beings?

Answer:

The difference is that the prophets receive direct revelation from God Almighty and are given commands either concerning their own affairs or commands to be proclaimed to other people. The rest of humanity do not receive such divine revelations. On the contrary, they are charged to follow the prophets.

Question:

How do we know that one who claims prophethood is telling the truth?

Answer:

We know the truthfulness of the claimant of prophethood by means of miracles. Miracles consist of supernatural feats that a prophet performs which indicate that he is from God, since if he were not he could never perform such acts.

Question:

Give examples of miracles.

Answer:

For example:

1- Ibrahim (peace be upon him) was cast into the fire but did not get burnt.

2- Musa (peace be upon him) would throw down his staff and it would turn into a huge serpent. Then when he picked it up it would return to its original condition.

3- ‘Isa (peace be upon him) would heal the blind and lepers and by the will of God would bring the dead to life.

4- Muhammad (God’s blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) split the moon into two and brought the Qur’an the like of which man has been incapable of producing.

Question:

How is it that man has been incapable of producing something like the Qur’an?

Answer:

The Qur’an itself has challenged mankind and invited him to bring forth something like itself. “Say: If men and jinn should meet together to bring the like of this Qur’an, they could not bring the like of it, even if they came to the aid of one another” [*17*: 88].

And when they were incapable of producing the like of the whole Qur’an, they were challenged to produce only ten *suras* (chapters) like the suras in the Qur’an: “Bring you then ten forged *suras* like it…”[11: 13].

And when again they remained incapable, they were challenged to bring forth only one *sura* like a Qur’anic *sura*: “Then produce a *sura* like it”[2: 23].

But men of that day, even though they were eloquent and spoke the purest Arabic and were outstanding poets and masters of rhetoric could not meet these challenges and in the end fought the Prophet since they could not produce even the like of the smallest *sura*, *al-Kawthar* [no. *108*], which says:

“In the Name of God, the most Merciful, the most Compassionate.

Verily, we have granted you [Oh Muhammad] *al-kawthar*.

Therefore turn in prayer to your Lord and sacrifice [to Him].

For he who makes you angry will be cut off.”

Question:

What are the special attributes of the prophets?

Answer:

Prophets, Imams and angels all share the same quality, namely they are free from error and every transgression or sin. Throughout their entire life they never disobey God Almighty or commit a sin, since they are aware of the majesty of God Almighty, and at the same time are also utterly aware of the detestable nature of disobedience: both these factors prevent them from committing any transgression. Similarly the Prophets and the Imams possess the finest of virtues like courage, generosity, sense of honour, noble-mindedness and so on and they are free from every ignoble trait. They have to be absolutely the best of the people of their time and therefore it is incumbent upon people to follow them.

Question:

Do Prophets and Imams possess some degree of divinity just as Christians have claimed regarding Christ?

Answer:

Absolutely not, for Prophets and Imams are human. However they receive guidance from God Almighty and possess the quality of freedom from error and from every transgression and sin as well as possessing all the other virtues. Christ too was nothing but a human being: Almighty God created him from his mother without a father, just as God Almighty created Adam and Hawa without father or mother.

RESURRECTION

Question:

What is the third fundamental from among the Islamic fundamental beliefs?

Answer:

The third fundamental belief of Islam is resurrection: this means that after the destruction of the world, and after the death of everything alive, God Almighty will again bring people to life, so that He may give them the recompense for what they did in this life - one who has believed and done good deeds, his recompense

will be paradise, and as to one who did not believe or was disobedient, hell shall be his end.

Question:

Many people do not know the truth being either incapable of finding it out because their powers of understanding are weak, like the mentally deranged or the mentally retarded, or because they are far from the centres of religion and therefore, since they have little contact with the truth, have not heard about the true faith. Are such people unbelievers and will therefore go to hell?

Answer:

Not at all. No one will enter the fires of hell except those who have received clear knowledge about Islam, so the mentally deranged and those incapable of finding out the truth will be examined at the resurrection on the day of judgement. Those who pass the test on that day will go to heaven but as to those who fail, their lot will be hell.

Question:

If man dies does he stop functioning until the day of resurrection?

Answer:

No, for when man dies his body decays but his spirit stays alive. If he is a believer and has done good deeds in this life he will be in a state of happiness after death. However if he was an unbeliever and disobedient to God's commands, his spirit will undergo suffering.

Question:

What is the name of the world after this life, but before the day of resurrection?

Answer:

Its name is “Barzakh”. In this way man, from the beginning to the end, encounters six worlds:

1. The world prior to being human, for every man is first dust, then becomes plant or animal, and then when man eates of them his seed will be formed.

2. The world of humanity, which starts with the implantation of the sperm in the mother's womb until a human is born into this life.
3. The physical world, in which we are at present and where we have obligations to perform. It is how we carry out these duties and obligations that determines our future destiny.
4. The world of Barzakh.
5. The world of resurrection (day of recompense) the duration of which, according to the Qur'an, is fifty thousand years.
6. The final world which will be paradise or hell.

Question:

Is there proof for the survival of the soul?

Answer:

The survival of the soul has become a widespread subject for study and special courses have been drawn up in western countries and elsewhere. The book by Abu Madyan, and many other works that have been written about the soul and the spirit, the summoning up of souls, dreams and similar phenomena can be profitably referred to.

This is from the experimental and ocular point of view but from the philosophical and auditory angle there are numerous proofs for the survival of the soul and for the resurrection that have been set out in books of Islamic philosophy.

PARADISE

Question:

What is paradise?

Answer:

Paradise is a place which God Almighty has prepared for the believers who perform righteous deeds and which man enters after his soul returns to the body he had in this life. In paradise there is every kind of pleasure: gardens and mansions and pure

breezes, vitality, chaste wives, delectable foods and delicious beverages.

If man enters paradise he shall remain there forever and there does not exist in it anything that troubles mankind in this life like poverty, disease, fatigue, jealousy, tribulations, oppression, incapacity, hunger, nudity, thirst, distress, enmity and animosity. The inhabitants of paradise shall remain young forever, in a state of bliss and happiness.

Paradise is extensive and vast, so much so that every man is given a palace bigger than the whole world. He will be put in charge of companies of angels, but greater than all those blessings is that God will be pleased with him: “and best of all is God's goodly pleasure”[9:72].

In this way, it is incumbent upon man throughout his life to strive for that place and that he should only get from this world what suffices him, and on no account should he perform impious deeds or disobey God, so that he does not lose that eternal and everlasting recompense.

HELL

Question:

What is hell?

Answer:

Hell is the opposite of paradise. It is a place that God has made ready for unbelievers and the disobedient and therein exist a variety of physical and psychological tortures. Man in hell is in a state of torment and punishment and has to deal with chains of fire and unquenchable flames - flames that will never ever be put out. Therein he is in a despised and lowly state and God has destined that one sent to hell shall spend his time in eternal torment and shall not die: “As often as their skins are roasted through we shall change them for other skins”[*4*: 56].

Therefore it is obligatory upon man that he should strive in this world with all his strength so that he does not enter into hell. That place is for the obstinate of whom God says: “But if they returned

[to the world], they would revert to that which they were forbidden"[*6*: 28].

THE DAY OF JUDGEMENT

Question:

What is the Day of Judgement?

Answer:

After man dies he remains for a long time in the state of Barzakh and then God Almighty brings him to life for God's court of justice. Therein all created beings will gather and each will be given his own dossier and in it all his pious and bad deeds will have been recorded. "So, he who has done an atom's weight of good shall see it. And he who has done an atom's weight of evil shall see it"[*99*: 7,8].

When he looks at his record of deeds and sees that all his actions, hidden and apparent, have been written in it, and even his thoughts and the misgivings of his heart have not been omitted, he is surprised and says, "Ah! Woe to us! What sort of book is this! It does not omit a small thing nor a big thing but numbers them (all)"[*18*: 49].

Then the scales are set up and the Prophets and their successors and the martyrs stand up to intercede at the trials and judgements: whoever was a true believer and did good acts, his lot shall be paradise and, as previously mentioned, the day of resurrection will be equivalent to fifty thousand years.

THE JUSTICE OF GOD

Question:

What are the remaining beliefs that are fundamental to Islam?

Answer:

They are justice; the imamate; *qada'* and *qadar*; compulsion or free will.

Question:

What is meant by justice?

Answer:

Justice means that God is fair and is not unjust to anyone, and does not commit any shameful act. Whatever oppression, cruelty and evil we see in the world is from human kind. For example, if one man kills another this murder is an evil act and an injustice that has been committed by man, not by God.

Question:

It is true that an aggressive act committed by an individual on another is not from God, but how do you account for natural disasters like floods, storms, earthquakes, diseases and so on that humans have no hand in, and which, in the main part, result in death and misery for innocent people?

Answer:

These matters which people have no hand in can be explained in this way: for the transgressors it is a chastisement, and for the innocent it is a warning, and they will be recompensed in the hereafter.

IMAMATE

Question:

What is the imamate?

Answer:

The meaning of the imamate is that the greatest of all the prophets, Muhammad (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) appointed by the command of God Almighty successors to take his place after his demise in guiding the people and showing them the true path. Their number is twelve, in succession.

Question:

Who are the 12 Imams?

Answer:

1. Imam 'Ali, Amir al-Mu'minin
2. Imam al-Hasan

3. Imam al-Husayn
4. Imam Zayn al-‘Abidin
5. Imam Muhammad al-Baqir
6. Imam Ja‘far al-Sadiq
7. Imam Musa al-Kadhim
8. Imam ‘Ali al-Rida
9. Imam Muhammad al-Jawad
10. Imam ‘Ali al-Hadi
11. Imam Hasan al-‘Askari
12. Imam al-Hujja al-Mahdi

Question:

What are their characteristics?

Answer:

These Imams, as is of course the case with the Prophet Muhammad and his daughter Fatima al-Zahra’, are all protected by God from every sin and transgression and they stand at the highest level of virtue and holiness. The difference between the Prophet Muhammad and the Imams is that the Prophet was the recipient of revelation direct from God himself whereas this was not the case with the Imams.

Question:

What distinguishes the Imams from great discoverers and inventors?

Answer:

Apart from the fact that the Imams are God’s deputies (*khulafa’ Allah*) on earth and are at the highest peak of humanity, they also laid out the bases for a happy life and followed the correct way which would make such a life a reality. They showed clearly the path to a true humanity so that were people only to follow it, they would experience happiness in this world before they did so in the next. Is it not reasonable that whoever indicates the way to attain such a life should have a higher status than

someone who introduces to mankind lighting or a new means of travelling about?

Question:

Explain the distinction and difference.

Answer:

A life of well-being and happiness, before anything else, depends on peace and security, freedom from want, knowledge, health and virtue. In contrast, war, poverty and ignorance, disease, crime and depravity in all its forms, result necessarily in distress. Secondly it depends upon factors that make life more comfortable like aeroplanes for travelling, electricity for lighting and elevators for getting up into high buildings. These ways to make life easier are to be contrasted with the use of animals for travelling and candles for lighting, and so on.

It is clear that these means alone cannot be the means of welfare and prosperity for man unless life is so structured that it will bring about happiness and well-being. What is better, having peace, even if man lights a candle to see, or having electricity, when man at the same time is plagued by wars and anarchy?

The Prophets and Imams made clear to the people the way to a life of well-being which is the most important thing. Thus it is a mistake to compare the virtues of anyone else to their virtues even though he be an inventor or a scientist.

Question:

Is it correct that Muslims believe that the twelfth imam, Imam al-Mahdi is still alive? If so, what is the use?

Answer:

Yes. The truthful Prophet and the Imams have testified that he remains alive, to appear at the end of time and fill the world with justice after it had been full of oppression. He will establish peace everywhere as well as bringing prosperity, knowledge, health and virtuous living which will turn this world into a small paradise.

Question:

Is it possible for anyone to have such a long life?

Answer:

It is indeed possible, for history has related that some people have lived for centuries. Also modern knowledge has proved the possibility of survival. So much so that in the west at the present time research is being specifically carried out to this end. And more than all this, is the truth that God Almighty is omnipotent and all-powerful.

Question:

What is the meaning of *qada'* and *qadar*?

Answer:

Just as an engineer draws out plans for a building, provides the necessary equipment and materials, and gives the workers the necessary instructions for carrying out the work, similarly God too has drawn out a wise plan for this world called *qadar*.

Thereafter, he has also provided the equipment and materials by means of which work may be carried out, that is *qada'*. After that, He ordered people to do good and forbad them from doing evil and now whoever does a good thing will be rewarded for it, and whoever does something bad will be punished.

Thus God in the Holy Qur'an says: "If you do good, you do good [only] for yourselves, but if you transgress [you transgress] against yourselves"[*17*: 7].

Question:

What is the meaning of *jabr* and *ikhtiyar*: compulsion and free will? Is man forced in his actions or does he possess free will?

Answer:

Jabr is the opposite of *ikhtiyar*. For example, a healthy person can choose to move his hand about at will but the movement of the hand of a person afflicted with a trembling ailment is involuntary.

Man has freedom of choice in his actions: he can do good or do bad as he wishes. However, man has no freedom of choice in matters like being male or female, white or black, handsome or ugly and so on.

Question:

Is God Almighty involved at all in the actions of mankind?

Answer:

Yes, and the meaning of that is: means and materials are from God and the action is from man. For instance, if someone builds a house, the labourers, the aptitude of the contractor, the land on which the house is to be built and the building materials are the result of God's creation whereas the actual process of constructing the house is the work of man. So it is with man's actions. If he does something good, prayer for example, he deserves a reward for that but if he does something bad, like adultery, he deserves to be punished.

3-ISLAMIC MORAL QUALITIES, ETHICS AND IDEALS

Question:

What are moral qualities or traits?

Answer:

They are of two kinds: those relating to the heart; those relating to parts of the body and the limbs.

Question:

Please provide examples for each kind.

Answer:

Moral traits relating to the heart are, for instance, tenderness of heart or, conversely, jealousy, and examples of traits relating to parts of the body are truthfulness or lying.

Question:

Moral qualities, as a whole, may be divided into how many kinds?

Answer:

They can be divided, on the whole, into two kinds:

1. Good moral traits, or virtues, whose presence in man is commendable.
2. Bad moral traits, or vices, whose presence in man is found repulsive.

Question:

What is man's responsibility as regards moral principles?

Answer:

Man is charged with adorning himself with "virtues" and avoiding vices, for virtues are perfection and vices are a deficiency. Man by nature seeks perfection and distances himself from defects.

Question:

Is it possible for man to adorn himself with virtues and keep away from vices?

Answer:

Yes, this is possible, for man’s soul is like a white sheet of paper which is receptable to any colour. The only thing is that it is difficult to be in command of one's soul which needs to be made tractable and, particularly with regard to acquiring virtues, it requires continuous vigilance until the praiseworthy quality becomes inherent in one’s nature. When such a quality becomes fixed within a person’s soul, he or she cannot help but do good and does so without any hardship

The soul, when it comes to ethics, is similar to man when he wants to learn or make things. A man needs to learn and apply continually his knowledge in order to become an artisan who almost automatically and without difficulty can perform his job. In the same way man can acquire virtues

Question:

Give an example of this.

Answer:

If someone wants to be truthful he should tirelessly make an effort to speak nothing but the truth, and should do this time and time again until truthfulness becomes a part of his nature. The same applies to other qualities especially the most commendable which are more of a trial for the soul of man.

Question:

How does Islam regard having moral principles?

Answer:

Islam incessantly orders people to acquire virtues and forbids them from doing base deeds

Question:

What is to be gained from tiring oneself to acquire virtues and of keeping away from bad things?

Answer:

Virtues and good deeds benefit both the individual and society, as opposed to base things which harm equally the individual and society. For example, activity, which is in itself a virtue, makes man progress and strive harder and at the same time encourages society to develop more, whereas stagnation and laziness harm both man and society. Such is the case with all the virtues and vices.

Question:

Some say that ethical principles reflect a society divided by class. Is this true?

Answer:

Not at all. Let us ask this group whether justice in the application of the law is a mere reflection of a particular society and so if the attitudes of that society were to change, injustice would become an admired quality? And is treason against the state such that if a different kind of society came about, treason would be counted lawful? A similar argument can be applied to all the other virtues.

Virtue will always be virtue and baseness will always be baseness and this is irrespective of how society is at a particular time or how it changes.

Question:

What are good moral traits?

Answer:

There are many good moral traits. We will here mention some of them:

1-Honesty in Word and Deed:

Man should be truthful in what he says and should be honest in what he does, in that his actions do not contradict what he really believes as in the case of a person who, out of outward show or flattery, is respectful to another although in his heart he thinks otherwise. Man should also be sincere in his actions. This means that he should not give the impression

that he is intent on doing a particular thing whereas he really wants to do something else. He should also keep his promises and never break his word. He should avoid pretence and not make himself out to be something that he is not, like someone, for instance, who wears tattered clothes so that people will think that he is poor whereas in reality he is well-off.

2-Trustworthiness in Speech and Character:

Man should be sincere with his Lord and should not offend Him on any account. He should be honest in his dealings with others and not cheat anyone and should be trustworthy with regard to things that belong to other people and never betray their trust. He should act honourably concerning the reputation of another and never do anything God has forbidden behind his back.

The importance of these two virtues, truthfulness and trustworthiness have been emphasized in *hadith* transmitted from the Holy Prophet and his pure progeny to the extent that one of the traditions relates that, "Every prophet sent by God was truthful in what he said and trustworthy in his dealings".[1] Indeed an honest and trustworthy man is loved by others and by God and is successful in what he does, in contrast to a liar and one who cannot be trusted who wrecks his future even though he may benefit from some brief gain in the short term.

3-Courage:

Man should be courageous and intrepid, and in his affairs should not let fear near him, for the coward is always at the end of the line. Every prophet and reformer possessed this quality and this is enough to show how desirable it is. They could otherwise never have been able to change society from being a corrupt one to being righteous and lead it from decadence onto the path of upward development, since to confront people with what they do not want to hear even

[1] See *Usul al-Kafi*, Muhammad b. Ya'qub al-Kulayni (d. 329/940), Beirut, 1995, p.111, with the addition, " ……with a pious man and an unrighteous one [alike]".

though it is for their own good requires the strongest kind of courage.

4-Generosity:

In society there are always poor and needy people, and there are always schemes which need help. [Those who give generously] are the mainstays of society upon whom the disadvantaged pin their hopes. Therefore man should be generous and give liberally. If the generous person is rich, his generosity will not be a cause of loss for him, and if he should be of average means his smaller contribution will also be accepted. According to the popular saying, "The best generosity is to give whatever you can". The poet says:

If the world has favoured you dispense of its bounty

to others before it slips from your grasp,

If this bounty is coming your way generosity will not destroy it

and if this bounty is leaving you, miserliness will not hold it back

5-A Sense of Honour:

Honour is a condition in man by means of which he protects those things which should be protected and guarded like religion, country, reputation and so on and is one of the virtues. If an individual or community cease to have honour their very nature comes under threat.

Of course teachers of ethics have talked in detail about those things which are a matter of honour, as well as those things in which it would be harmful if a sense of honour were applied but that is outside the scope of this book.

6-Cooperation in Good Works:

Life is not shaped by the individual but, on the contrary, by individuals cooperating together. The greater this cooperation and mutual assistance, the more life will get better and the more society will progress. Cooperation is of various kinds: through intellectual endeavour, through money, work, and the various ways of cooperating as a community.

7-Effort and Joy:

Man loves pleasures and comfort which are the enemies of progress and advancement and cause laziness, indolence, backwardness and decline. Therefore effort and activity have become indispensable for mankind. Activity is incumbent upon mankind since it is a quality which moves him forward in all aspects of life. Anyone who is not active and does not make an effort will undoubtedly remain backward. Similarly, any nation which does not possess this quality is on the road to decline.

8-Organization:

Imam Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) says "By God I exhort you to organize your affairs". [1]

Man's time is very scarce and the duties and responsibilities that he has in relation to himself, society, his future in this world and the afterlife are numerous. Therefore he should organize his tasks carefully and meticulously.

In this respect he should take an example from the phenomena of the universe. Everything has a special system otherwise the universe would be chaotic. Similarly if a government or administration does not have a system or division of work responsibilities, society will fall into disarray.

9-Reform:

The world whether it likes it or not tends towards disorder. Time makes every new thing obsolete and destroys eventually anything that has been built. Tyrants corrupt nations and treat the people like slaves. Therefore, man must rise like a reformer and, according to his ability, make the world a better place to live in, make people more civilized, improve society by introducing into it ways by which it can progress and go forward, and reform conditions which have got out of order or been corrupted by the oppressors.

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[1] See *Nahj al-Balagha*, ed. 'Aziz-Allah al-'Utaradi, Iran, 2nd. Print. 1995, p. 362: "I exhort you and all my offspring and my family and those who hear these words to fear God and organize your affairs" - from 'Ali's last testament (no. 47).

10-Cleanliness:

The Holy Prophet (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) says, "cleanliness is a part of faith".

- Cleanliness is of four kinds:
- Cleanliness in speech, which means that man's speech should be free of idle talk, meaningless utterances, gossip, lies, poking fun at people and so forth.
- Cleanliness in character, that is not doing bad and nasty things.
- Cleanliness in every part of the body, which is fulfilled by washing thoroughly, removing dirt and grime, and by using perfumes.
- Cleanliness in one's clothes and in one's food and drink and so on.

11- Moderation:

Man should be moderate in all his affairs. For excess and over-indulgence cause fatigue and, consequently, destruction. Wastage creates backwardness and decadence. God, in the Qur'an, states:

"Thus we have made you a moderate nation"[*2*: 143]. For example, if the safest speed for a a car is 100 kms per hour, then the speed of 150 kms per hour is excessive and the speed of 50 kms per hour is too little.

12-Justice:

In all his dealings man must be just whether they are personal, family or social, whether he is a judge or ruling a country or anything else. In the heart of every man, God Almighty has placed a yardstick by which he can distinguish justice from injustice. Justice is one of the greatest virtues and personal qualities by means of which man can reach the highest levels of spirituality.

13-Prudence:

By this quality man can organize affairs according to wisdom and correctness, paying careful attention to matters that concern him personally: giving and receiving, bringing up his children, getting on with people, and, if he is the manager of a business or the like, how best to run it; similarly in all his affairs, whether they be personal or affect society as a whole, whether they be religious or worldly and so on.

14-Affability and Amiable Conduct:

This means he speaks to others kindly and maintains a pleasant countenance whether they be his family or relatives, neighbours, his colleagues at work or anyone else. He should try to acquire the friendship of others through the interchange of visits and gifts, by participating in the happiness and sorrows of other people, by forgiving anyone who does him a wrong and by apologizing to anyone he may have offended.

15-Piety:

Man should fear God in all circumstances and in everything he does. He should not do anything which displeases God Almighty for he will not remain forever in this world. He will die and afterwards if he has done good he will receive a good reward but if has done bad he will be duly punished

In addition to this, piety is one of the best ways by which both the individual and society will prosper in this world.

16-Knowledge:

Not, however, just a little knowledge: on the contrary, just as the Holy Prophet of Islam has stated, "Seek knowledge from the cradle to the grave". It is through knowledge that God Almighty raises the status of a human being in His sight for as He himself states in the Qur'an: "Allah will exalt those of you who believe, and those who are given knowledge, in high degrees"[*58*: 11].

Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali (peace be upon him) also says: "The worth of a person is what he knows"[1].

17-Fondness and Friendship:

Man has been created a social being and so the more his friendship with his fellow creatures increases, the more his own hidden merits and those of the community where he lives become apparent, and this is always perceived whenever a man loves other human beings and when people get on with each other in a spirit of friendship. Therefore we read in the *hadith*: "A believer is someone who is fond of others and so others become fond of him, and there is nothing praiseworthy to say about a person who is not affectionate towards others and so he himself is not the recipient of affection". [2]

18-High-mindedness:

It has always been high-aiming aspirations, which have raised man to the ranks of the great ones.

The poet in praise of the Prophet (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) says:

He has aspirations the greatest of which there is no limit to it,

and whose smallest one is more sublime than time itself.

19-Perseverance:

Man is perpetually confronted with problems, particularly if he strives for progress desiring advancement for society and wishing to work for the common good. So if he defies misfortune and continues in his work he will succeed but if he does not, he will be counted among the losers. As God states: "Verily, those who say, 'Our Lord is Allah', and then they stand fast, on them the angels will descend [saying], 'Fear not, nor grieve'…….."[*41*: 30].

[1] *Nahj al-balagha*, *hikma* no 78, page 419.
[2] See *Kanz al-'ummal*, vol. I, p. 141, *hadith* 678; p. 142, *hadith* 679 for similar versions; the latter has the addition, " …. and the best people are those who do the most for others".

20-Adherence to the Highest Standards in the Treatment of Others:

Such as, possessing humility, which is not being proud; having no arrogance; possessing forbearance and not flying into a rage. Also having patience and not being easily irritated; doing good for other people and not hesitating from being a service to others, and so on.

There are many other virtues that scholars of ethics have mentioned in more detail in their books and which contain a greater number of verses from the Qur'an and *hadith* of the Holy Prophet and the pure Imams.

4-AN ISLAMIC LIFE-STYLE

Question:

What is meant by an Islamic life-style?

Answer:

An Islamic life-style relates to man's various activities but, however, concerns matters which Islam either encourages or discourages but which are not in the category of being obligatory or forbidden.

Such a life-style or way of living is to the greater benefit of the individual and society in this world and the next.

Question:

If these matters bring about an upward spiritual growth in man why has not Islam made them obligatory?

Answer:

Because Islam realizes that man by nature is weak and does not want to tire him out with a plethora of laws. Therefore it has only made obligatory what is essential for his religion and his well-being in this life and has left the non-essential matters up to him entirely. If he wishes he can do them, and if he does not want to do them then he need not. Islam has issued directives concerning matters of which it approves or disapproves so that those of strong character who seek greater advance and well-being for themselves and for society as a whole should act upon them.

Question:

Please give us examples of Islamic behaviour or an Islamic life-style.

Answer:

An Islamic life-style is multi-faceted but here we shall set out the main aspects of Islamic behaviour and which relate to the following subjects:

1. What a woman should do when a man wants to marry her, and vice-versa. The subject is bound up with

considerations regarding religion, manners, looks, finance, family and maturity.

2. The marriage ceremony, dowry, the intimate side of marriage, how a husband and wife should treat one another, the waiting-period after divorce (the *'idda*), becoming a widow.
3. Pregnancy, breast-feeding and the bringing-up of children.
4. Responsibility relating to work (man and wife) within the house and outside.
5. Dress code in relation to fabric, colour, cut and the number of dresses.
6. The hair, beard, eyebrows and the hair on the rest of the body, as regards combing, oiling, cutting and beautifying, the removal and plucking of hair and dyeing and colouring.
7. The rules of caring and looking after the body as regards oiling, rubbing the skin and doing exercise.
8. Eating and drinking.
9. Waking, sleeping, lying down and stretching out the body.
10. Applying kohl (antimony) to the eyes, brushing the teeth, using a toothpick or dental floss, making the mouth smell nice as well as the whole body.
11. Going to the bathroom or toilet with regard to entering and leaving, how to cleanse oneself with water and remove impurities (after bodily functions) and wearing a bathing cloth.
12. Meeting one another and such topics as being the first to greet the gathering, opening up space for others, and the guarding of tongue, eyes and ears from habits incompatible with good manners like whispering in someone's ear; eschewing foolish talk; the use of polite language when meeting others and avoiding vulgarity; and the way of sitting properly.

13. Eating and the way of eating with others; washing the hands before and after eating; to eat only when hungry and to stop eating before being full; how to sit properly before the food; to partake first of all with salt; saying *bismillahi-rrahmani-rrahim* (in the name of God, the Most Merciful, the Most Compassionate) at the beginning of the meal and *al-hamdulillahi Rabb al-'alamin* (praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds), or similar expressions of thanks to God, at the end.
14. Drinking water: whether to drink standing or sitting; gulping down the water or drinking in sips; the suitable time to drink.
15. Making a living and engaging in trade.
16. Farming.
17. Keeping healthy: ways of preventing bad health and how best to go about a cure.
18. Teaching and learning, duties of a teacher and his student, composition, handwriting and memorising lessons.
19. Business transactions; buying and selling; renting and pawning and related matters.
20. Buying poultry and birds and how best to look after them.
21. Keeping the house and the area around it clean and how best to arrange the house and its rooms and so on.
22. Acquiring livestock and other animals: watering and feeding them; getting them to carry loads and looking after them.
23. Constructing buildings.
24. Widening roads, digging wells, opening up canals and rivers.
25. Profiting from the hidden resources of the world: mines, treasure hoards (sea and land).
26. Behaviour when travelling or staying in a place.

27. The prescribed way of slaughtering an animal.
28. The sentencing of crimes and redress of grievances and matters relating to the judge, the witnesses, the taking down in writing of the court proceedings, documents produced to substantiate a claim, the way a courtroom should be arranged and the hearing of an independent opinion.
29. Wearing gold and jewellery and looking in the mirror.
30. Going to the lavatory as regards squatting or sitting, what to say before entering and after leaving and the removal of impurities.
31. Socializing with relatives and people in general; shaking hands and so on.
32. Establishing peace and enacting a peace-treaty; war and attacking the enemy.
33. Boarding and alighting from a vehicle and the like, alighting in the middle of the road, accompanying a friend on a journey.
34. Someone who is about to die, someone who has died, the funeral procession, the grave, mourning and so on.
35. How a healthy person treats someone who is ill.
36. Being rich and being poor.
37. Telling other people about Islam and how best to guide them to the truth.
38. The way a judge, religious scholar, preacher, imam of the mosque and other people in authority should behave.
39. Making a will, matters relating to the carrying out of punishments and judicial retaliation.
40. Invoking God, the five daily ritual prayers, the other acts of worship and the visiting of holy shrines.

There are many other topics for which we would require numerous volumes if we were to cover them in detail. Our aim here was simply to refer to the main themes.

5-WHAT IS FORBIDDEN IN ISLAM

Question:

What is the meaning of something forbidden?

Answer:

Something forbidden is what Islam has prohibited and has forbidden being done absolutely.

Question:

Why has Islam forbidden certain things?

Answer:

Because in doing them there is considerable harm.

Question:

If someone does a forbidden thing what will be his lot?

Answer:

Distress in this life and suffering in the world to come.

Question:

Give an example of distress in this life? What is it like?

Answer:

For example: gambling leads to loss of possessions, alcoholic drinks lead to illnesses, listening to songs can cause neurasthenia, adultery has the effect of confusing genealogy, sodomy is the source of venereal diseases and related ailments in both partners, interest brings about disorder in economic balance.

Question:

So why don't we see these harmful consequences in society despite the fact that most, if not all, of these prohibited acts are widespread?

Answer:

In fact it is the reverse:

Crime has spread throughout the length and breadth of society, the courts are being swamped by criminals and the prisons are full.

Economic imbalance has reached its apex in that some possess millions while others are dying of hunger.

Dangerous diseases have got out of control so that thousands of hospitals, clinics and pharmacies and the like are of no avail in getting rid of them or even limiting their scope.

Anxiety and confusion have taken over people's lives to an extent never seen previously in history.

In short, revolutions and wars dominate the history books of our time so that there is no room for anything else: wars which leave in their wake misfortune, tears, blood and catastrophes.

After all that we have said above, can it still be claimed that forbidden acts (according to Islam) have no bad effects?

Question:

What are things forbidden by Islam?

Answer:

Islamic prohibitions are numerous, some of which are as follows:

1. Assisting an unjust person.
2. Turning away from remembering God.
3. Wasting money (or any of God's bounties).
4. (For men), wearing golden trinkets or silk clothes.
5. Masturbation.
6. Causing distress to others.
7. Using gold or silver utensils.
8. Divulging the secrets of others.
9. Disobedience of parents by children, and unsubmissiveness of a wife to her husband (in those instances where submission is obligatory).

10. Spreading rumours about adulterous behaviour and the like.
11. Hoarding essential commodities.
12. Endangering one's life unnecessarily.
13. Charm, magic and so on.
14. Slander and malicious accusations.
15. Astrology and the like.
16. Swindling and fraud.
17. Altering a dead person’s will.
18. Spying on others.
19. Murdering or wounding another or severing one of his limbs.
20. Withholding what is due to God or to man.
21. Imprisoning someone unjustly.
22. Jealousy.
23. Squandering money held in trust for others.
24. Drinking any intoxicating liquid: alcoholic beverages or anything else.
25. Eating the meat of an animal not slaughtered according to Islamic law, eating pork or other forbidden meats, eating or drinking impure things and eating other forbidden things like clay and so on.
26. Betrayal, deceit and cheating.
27. Stealing.
28. Acting as a procurer (pimp) to bring a man and a woman together for illicit sex, or two men or a boy and a girl.
29. Telling lies.
30. Using insulting language against God, the Prophets, Imams, Islam, the Qur’an or against other people.

31. Hypocrisy in all its kinds, one of which is being double-faced, that is praising a person when he is present but backbiting him in his absence.
32. Bribery.
33. Usury.
34. Robbing travellers on the road.
35. Shaving off the beard and the cutting off of any of one's bodily parts or getting rid of one of the faculties, such as blinding oneself.
36. The free mixing and intermingling of boys and girls in a forbidden manner.
37. Approving what is forbidden.
38. Adultery, sodomy, lesbianism, looking with desire at someone or touching him/her who is not in that degree of consanguinity that precludes marriage.
39. Punishing others unjustly.
40. Falsely accusing someone of adultery, sodomy or being illegitimate.
41. Spreading lies, backbiting, getting involved in useless talk and spreading discord.
42. Attempting to demolish mosques or desecrate them.
43. To show someone in a bad light in front of ruthless people.
44. Making musical instruments, things for gambling, crucifixes.
45. Women discarding the veil and showing their fineries in public.
46. Breaking an oath, a vow or a covenant.
47. Giving a false testimony and concealing the truth.
48. The playing of chess, backgammon and other such games.
49. Not looking after those family members who are his dependants.

50. Oppressing people and violating the rights of others.
51. Getting worked up about matters of little consequence.
52. Songs with music.
53. Spreading corruption or evil ways.
54. Breaking off ties with one's close relations, being disobedient to parents, and not looking after one's children.
55. Using short weights and tampering with the scales.
56. Singing love poetry about a chaste woman or man who is not your wife/ husband.
57. Revealing one's private parts in front of someone who is outside the degree of consanguinity.
58. Arguing for the sake of arguing.
59. Peeping into the houses of neighbours.
60. Using anything which causes excessive harm to the body and similarly harming others ………… and other prohibitions.

You, esteemed reader, will see at a glance that the reason for most of these prohibitions is clear and obvious, and does not require much reflection. For example, can anyone deny the repugnance of murder, pillaging the property of others or injuring them, spying into other people's houses or doing harm?

However, some of the matters do require some thought concerning the reason for their prohibition, for instance gambling, alcoholic drinks and women not covering their heads and their dressing immodestly. Anyone must surely realize that gambling leads to anxiety and material loss, alcohol causes numerous illnesses, dressing immodestly can often lead to immorality and the breaking up of families, and so on and so on. Is there any religion or legal system which has not formulated a list of forbidden things? Nevertheless the question remains, does not the fact that certain things are forbidden lead to a degree of unhealthy repression? The answer is that anything which leads to

bad things has to be repressed or restrained in some way and legal systems, in general, are full of attempts to do so.

6-ISLAMIC ACTS OF WORSHIP

Question:

What is the meaning of worship?

Answer:

Worship are those things that Islam has made obligatory and must be performed with the intention of seeking nearness or closeness to God Almighty.

Question:

What is meant by the intention of seeking nearness to God?

Answer:

It means that the action should be performed only for the sake of God and this intention distinguishes acts of worship and the other obligatory acts, because worship requires the intention of seeking nearness to God whereas acts which are not worship, but which are considered a means of gaining access to God's mercy, may be performed without that specific intention.

Question:

Give an example of both:

Answer:

For example, offering prayers is an act of worship and they are not valid without the intention of seeking nearness to God but washing an item of clothing to make it pure is not worship and therefore can be done without that intention.

Question:

Why is worship conditional upon the intention of drawing near to God?

Answer:

Firstly, because worship is obedience to God Almighty and complete obedience cannot be expressed unless the act of worship is performed solely for the sake of God. Secondly, worship elevates the soul and so if man continually remembers God and

realizes that he is in the presence of his Lord who is the Great, the Powerful, the All-Seeing and All-Hearing, undoubtedly he will be granted an excellence of character which will lead him towards the highest spirituality and noblest conduct and will distance him from bad things, whether they be attitudes of mind or actual deeds.

PRAYING

Question:

What are the Islamic acts of worship?

Answer:

The most important Islamic acts of worship are prayers, fasting, *khums*, *zakat*, jihad and *hajj*.

Since this book has been written in order to provide a brief introduction to Islam, we will forgo an explanation of the wisdom and reasons behind these acts of worship and so anyone who wishes to know about these aspects should refer to our book entitled "Islamic Acts of Worship"[1].

Question:

What are prayers? How many units do they have and what else is involved?

Answer:

Prayers are of two kinds: obligatory prayers and recommended prayers.

Question:

Which are the obligatory prayers?

Answer:

Obligatory prayers are performed in the following sequence:

1. Dawn prayer (called *fajr* or *subh*). This has two units[2], and its time is from dawn to sunrise.

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[1] *'Ibadat al-Islam*, 3rd printing, Beirut, 1994.
[2] Each unit (or *raka'*) consists (briefly) of standing, bowing and then two prostrations.

2. Noon or Midday prayer (called *dhuhr*): four units, and its time is from the passing of the sun from the middle of the sky of the country where you happen to be until shortly before the sun sets beneath the horizon.[1]
3. Afternoon prayer (called *'asr*): four units, and its time is from after the noon prayer until the setting of the sun beneath the horizon.
4. Sunset prayer (called *maghrib*): three units, and its time is from sunset, which means in this case when the redness in the sky has passed from above one's head (that is about a quarter of an hour after the actual sunset), until shortly before the middle of the night[2].
5. Evening prayer (called *'isha'*): four units, and its time is from after the sunset prayer until the middle of the night.

Question:

Do prayers while travelling differ from prayers in the place of residence?

Answer:

Yes. Prayers while travelling are "*qasr* - shortened" that is the midday (*dhuhr*), afternoon (*'asr*) and evening (*'isha'*) prayers should each be performed in two units like the dawn (*fajr*) prayer[3].

Question:

How is the prayer divided up?

Answer:

It is divided up as follows:

1. Saying *Allahu akbar*[4], after first having made the intention.

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[1] to the extent that there is still time for the afternoon prayer.

[2] so that there is time to prayer the evening prayer. Night here is defined as being the time from sunset (in the prayer sense) until the beginning of dawn.

[3] Note that the sunset prayer is not shortened.

[4] God is great.

2. The reading of the first chapter (*sura*) of the Qur'an (*al-Fatiha*), and any one other chapter, while standing.

3. Bowing with its specific invocation[1].

4. Standing upright again after bowing.

5. Two prostrations with their specific invocation[2], respectively, and sitting up between the two prostrations.

6. Standing up straight again, then the recitation of *al-Fatiha* and any other *sura* (just like 2 above) followed by the *Qunut* prayers[3] which are recommended but not obligatory.

7. Then bowing and standing up straight, after bowing; two prostrations (just like 5 above) and sitting back; then the saying of the *tashahhud*[4] and the *salam*[5].

That is the way to pray two units. As for prayers of three or four units, however, in the third and fourth unit instead of reciting *al-Fatiha* and any other *sura*, special praises to God are recited[6].

Question:

What are the conditions of prayers?

Answer:

The conditions of prayers are as follows:

1. To stand facing the Qibla[7].

2. Cleanliness of dress, the body and the place of prostration.

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[1] *Subhana rabbiyal-'adhim wa-bi-hamdih.*
[2] *Subhana rabbiyal-a'la wa-bi-hamdih.*
[3] As, for instance, *Allahumma salli 'ala Muhammadin wa-Aali Muhammad*; *Rabbana atina fi 'd-dunya hasanatan wa-fi 'l-akhirati hasanatan wa-qina 'adhab an-nar* [*2*: 201]; *Rabbana amanna bi-ma anzalta wa-ttaba'n-ar-rasula fa-ktubna ma'-ash-shahidin* [*3*: 53].
[4] Which includes (among other invocations) testifying (hence *tashahhud*) to the Divine Unity and the Prophethood of Muhammad and invoking the peace and blessings of God upon him and his progeny.
[5] *As-salam 'alaykum wa-rahmatullahi wa-barakatuh.*
[6] *Subhanallah*; *wa-'l –hamdulillah*; *wa-la ilaha illa -'llah*; *wa-'llahu akbar* (thrice).
[7] i.e. in the direction of Makka.

3. Being in the state of purification by means of ablutions (*wudu'*)[1] or *ghusl*[2] or *tayammum*[3].
4. The clothes of the person praying and the place of prayer must have been lawfully acquired.
5. Not doing anything which nullifies the prayers while they are being performed as, for example, flatulence and so on, laughing, or turning away from the Qibla.

Question:

Are there other prayers besides the daily prayers which Islam has made obligatory?

Answer:

Yes.

1. The prayer over the deceased.
2. The prayer at the time of wondrous or fearful happenings (*salat al-ayat*)[4].
3. The prayer after the circumambulation (*tawaf*)[5].
4. Prayers performed on behalf of a dead person, if an individual is obliged to do them.
5. Prayers said after a vow.

There is a particular way to pray each of these other obligatory prayers and books on jurisprudence should be consulted for details.

Question:

Which are the prayers which are particularly recommended?

Answer:

There are many recommended prayers, for instance:-

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[1] Washing the face and arms, and wiping the head and wiping the feet.
[2] Pouring water over the whole body.
[3] Using clean earth when no water is available.
[4] For instance at the time of a solar or lunar eclipse (whether full or partial), earthquakes, hurricanes and so on.
[5] i.e. the *tawaf* around the Holy Ka'ba in Makka at the time of Hajj or 'Umra.

1. Daily supererogatory prayers (*nawafil*)[1].
2. The special prayers for the month of Ramadan.
3. Recommended prayers on sacred days like religious festivals.
4. Prayers which have been narrated by the Prophet and the pure Imams, which they themselves used to perform and which are known by their names as, for instance, the Prayer of the Prophet (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) and the Prayer of 'Ali (peace be upon him).
5. Prayers which are recommended in various circumstances such as prayers when visiting holy shrines (either physically or at a distance), the special prayer to beseech Almighty God for rain (*istisqa'*), and the prayer of one who is in a state of fear.

FASTING

Question:

What is fasting?

Answer:

Fasting is keeping away from anything that will break the fast which is from the beginning of dawn until sunset.

Question:

How many different kinds of fasts are there?

Answer:

Fasts are of four kinds:

1. Compulsory fasts, such as the fast of the month of Ramadan.
2. Recommended fasts such as the fast of the month of Rajab[2].

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[1] Before and after the five obligatory prayers.
[2] The seventh month of the Muslim calendar.

3. Disapproved fasts like fasting on the day of ‘Ashura[1].
4. Forbidden fasts such as fasting on the Festival *(‘Id*) of al-Fitr and the Festival of al-Adha.[2]

Question:

How many days is it obligatory to fast in the month of Ramadan?

Answer:

For a Muslim on whom it is incumbent to fast, he or she must fast for a complete month, that is the month of Ramadan, which is the ninth month of the lunar calendar, the first month being al-Muharram.

Question:

What are the things to which you have alluded that will break the fast and so it is obligatory to abstain from them?

Answer:

They are 10 in number:-

1. Eating.
2. Drinking.
3. Sexual Intercourse.
4. Masturbation.
5. Remaining in a state of ritual impurity until after the beginning of dawn.[3]
6. Injection of a liquid.
7. Enabling thick powder or dust to reach the throat.
8. Dipping the head completely in water.
9. Vomiting.

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[1] The tenth day of al-Muharram on which day is commemorated the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn (peace be upon him), the grandson of the Holy Prophet (God’s blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny).

[2] Al-Fitr is the day after the fast of Ramadan and al-Adha is the 10th of the Islamic month of Dhu ’l-Hijja.

[3] i.e. being in a state of *janaba*, which requires a complete wash (*ghusl*).

10. To ascribe deliberately words or deeds which are false, to God, the Prophet or the 12 Imams.

Question:

If someone deliberately does not fast for a day, how can he requite himself?

Answer:

The requital for such a person is threefold :

1. After the month of Ramadan he must fast for a day, in lieu of that day.

2. He must make an expiation which must be one of the following three things:

   a. He should fast for two months successively, without a break.

   b. He should feed 60 poor persons.

   c. He should procure freedom for a believing slave.

3[1]. The Muslim jurist will chastise him for committing this transgression.

KHUMS* and *ZAKAT

Question:

What is *khums*?

Answer:

Khums consists of giving away twenty percent of income for the cause of God[2].

Question:

From what income should *khums* be given?

[1] If he does not do 1 and 2.
[2] See Qur'an (*8*: 41): "And know that whatever thing you gain (*ghanimtum*), a fifth of it (*khumusahu*) is for God, the Messenger, the near of kin, the orphans, the destitute and the wayfarer, if you believe in God and in that which we revealed to our slave [*'abdina*, i.e. Muhammad]…………".

Answer:

From seven things:

1. Booty from war.
2. Things that have been acquired by means of diving in the seas.
3. Mineral ore.
4. Profits and gains.
5. Land that a non-Muslim buys from a Muslim.
6. A *halal* (lawful or religiously permissible) gain which has been mixed with a *haram* (unlawful or religiously forbidden) gain.
7. Treasure.

Question:

To whom should *khums* be paid?

Answer:

A part of the *khums* should be paid to the Muslim jurist so that he may expend it according to Islamic activities as seems fit to him. The remainder is expended by the person concerned for helping orphans, poor people and needy travellers, from among the descendants of the Prophet (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny).

Question:

What is *zakat*?

Answer:

Zakat consists of the payment of a portion of certain assets for the cause of God.

Question:

From what things should *zakat* be paid?

Answer:

From three categories:-

1. The three groups of grazing livestock: cows, sheep and goats and camels.
2. The four types of grains: dates, raisins, wheat and barley.
3. Two types of coinage: gold and silver.

Thus *zakat* has to be paid obligatorily from nine things. It is recommended that *zakat* should also be paid from other things like properties and business assets.

Question:

To whom should *zakat* be given?

Answer:

Zakat should be expended in eight categories:-

1. The poor.
2. The penurious: one whose condition is more severe than that of a poor person.
3. Officials who are appointed to collect the *zakat*.
4. Matters that may be considered to be for the cause of God, that is anything which is for the benefit of the Muslims be it related to his religious or worldly affairs.
5. Debtors who are unable to pay their debts.
6. Wayfarers who cannot travel any further and cannot afford to return to their own homeland.
7. Those who receive from the *zakat* in order either to strengthen the faith already present in their hearts[1] or to discourage them from harming the Muslims.
8. Slaves: bondspersons who live under difficult conditions should be purchased with *zakat* money or freed.

JIHAD

Question:

What is jihad?

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[1] Such as recent converts to Islam.

Answer:

Jihad consists of fighting for the cause of God.

Question:

What is the object and aim of jihad?

Answer:

The purpose of jihad is two-fold:

1. Delivering people from superstitions in their beliefs and in what they do.
2. Freeing the oppressed from the claws of the oppressors.

Question:

Does Islam ever justify starting a fight or a war with non-Muslims without provocation?

Answer:

No, never. On the contrary Islam fights in self-defence against:

1. People of the Scriptures (*Ahl al-Kitab*), that is those who are possessors of a heavenly book, after they have been given an option between embracing Islam, or paying a tax (*jizya*), or fighting.
2. People other than the People of the Scriptures when it has given them a choice between embracing Islam or fighting.

Question:

Who are the people of the Scriptures?

Answer:

People of the Scriptures consist of Jews, Christians and Zorastrians, all of whom possess heavenly books.

Question:

Who are those people not considered to be among the People of the Scriptures?

Answer:

They are other non-Muslims such as idol-worshippers and the like.

Question:

What is the meaning of *jizya*?

Answer:

Jizya is an amount of money taken from the People of the Scriptures in return for the protection of the Muslims.

They are then free to practise their religious rites and they are excused from paying the *zakat* and the *khums*, which are taken from the Muslims.

Question:

Why make this difference? Wouldn't it be more just for the People of the Scriptures to be treated in the same way as Muslims?

Answer:

On the contrary, because the rights of the People of the Scriptures are fully safe-guarded under Islamic government whereas under other legal systems their rights have not been protected to such an extent, as is clear from the following principles:-

1. In an Islamic country People of the Scriptures enjoy the same rights as their fellow Muslim citizens.
2. Their life, property and honour is protected, just like that of the Muslims.
3. The people of the Scripture are free to organize for themselves their own religious ceremonies just as Muslims are.
4. With regard to legal problems, the People of the Scriptures can, if they wish, seek justice through the Muslim courts but if they prefer they can go to their own judges.
5. The People of the Scriptures pay the *jizya* to the Muslim ruler while Muslims pay *khums* and *zakat*. So can it

justifiably be said that the People of the Scriptures are oppressed under Islamic rule?

Question:

So why did Muslims ever fight the People of the Scriptures?

Answer:

The conflict was always with their governments who were characterized by the ugliest forms of oppression and persecution. We can see with what eagerness the inhabitants of those countries would welcome the Muslims, since they considered them to be their deliverers from the hands of their tyrannical rulers. History is the best witness to that. The same was the case with those non-Muslims who were not People of the Scriptures because the reason why the Muslims fought others was simply to exalt God's law and to deliver other nations from exploiters and despots who were ruling their people through violence and terror.

HAJJ

Question:

What is the Hajj?

Answer:

The Hajj consists of journeying to Makka in the Arabian Peninsula with the purpose of performing rites of worship.

Question:

Upon whom is Hajj obligatory?

Answer:

Hajj is obligatory upon one who is able to travel to Makka with his own money, on the proviso that this will not make him poor or cause him hardship.

Question:

How many times is Hajj obligatory upon a person who is able?

Answer:

Once in a lifetime.

Question:

Is Hajj also a recommended act (apart from the obligation)?

Answer:

Yes, for those people who cannot really afford it, and for those who can but have already performed the obligatory pilgrimage, Hajj is recommended.

Question:

What must be done on the Hajj?

Answer:

Hajj is divided into two parts:

a) ‘Umra[1].

b) Hajj.

a): the rites of ‘Umra are as follows:

1. *Ihram* (pilgrim’s dress) to be worn from the Miqat[2].
2. Going round the Holy Ka‘ba (*tawaf*) seven times.
3. Two units of prayer after the *tawaf* behind the station (*maqam*) of Ibrahim (peace be upon him).
4. Brisk walking (*sa‘i*) between the mountains of Safa and Marwa, seven times.
5. Cutting (*taqsir*) some hair off the hair of the head or cutting from the nails.

b): the rites of Hajj are as follows:

1. *Ihram* (pilgrim’s dress) to be worn from Makka.
2. Being on ‘Arafat on the ninth day of Dhu ’l- Hijja.
3. Being at the Mash‘ar [Muzdalifa] early on the morning of the tenth.

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[1] ‘Umra can also be performed by itself at most other times throughout the entire year.

[2] Miqat: Any one of the several places specified by the Holy Prophet (God’s blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) at which people put on the *Ihram* when on their way to Makka to perform Hajj or ‘Umra.

4. Setting out from the Mash‘ar towards Makka on the tenth day, namely the Festival (‘Id) of al-Adha.
5. Throwing seven pebbles at the Jamra of the ‘Aqaba on the ‘Id of al-Adha.
6. The slaughtering of an animal from among the three categories of livestock: camels, cows or sheep and goats.
7. Shaving the head or cutting the hair.
8. *Tawaf* of the Ka‘ba seven times, called the *tawaf* of *al-ziyara*.
9. Performing two units of prayer after this *tawaf* behind the *maqam* of Ibrahim (peace be upon him).
10. *Sa‘i* or brisk walking between Safa and Marwa, seven times.
11. Another *tawaf* around the Ka‘ba seven times, called the *tawaf* of *al-nisa’*.
12. As 9, above.
13. Staying at Mina on the eve of the eleventh and twelfth, and in some cases the eve of the thirteenth.
14. Throwing pebbles at the three Jamarat in Mina, each Jamra being stoned with seven pebbles during the daytime of the 11^{th} of Dhu ’l-Hijja and the 12^{th}, and also on the 13^{th} if the pilgrim had stayed at Mina on the eve of the 13^{th}.

Question:

When should a Muslim go on the Hajj?

Answer:

In the months of Hajj, namely Shawwal, Dhu ’l-Qa‘da and Dhu ’l-Hijja[1]. Of course, the Hajj itself can only be performed in the month of Dhu ’l-Hijja.

[1] The 10^{th}, 11^{th} and 12^{th} months of the Muslim calendar, respectively.

Question:

What is ‘Umra by itself (that is without Hajj)?

Answer:

The ‘Umra is exactly the same as we have mentioned above[1] plus the *tawaf* around the Ka‘ba, called the *tawaf* of *al-nisa’*, and the two units of prayer that follow it (as 11 and 12, above). This ‘Umra can be performed at any time during the whole year.

Question:

What are the benefits of Hajj?

Answer:

Hajj has many benefits, some of which we will point out here:

1-Political Benefits:

Hajj brings about unity among the Muslims and gives them strength, making their enemies fear their might.

2-Economic Benefits:

Hajj makes money circulate and move from one end of the Islamic World to the other and so causes trade to flourish.

3-Psychological Benefits:

It gives comfort to the soul and bestows the calm and piece of mind that travelling brings and which dispel anxiety and worry regarding the homeland for as the poet says:

Go abroad to seek high things

and travel, for in travel there are five benefits,

The dispelling of anxiety, gaining a livelihood,

a sound mind, a good code of conduct

and admirable company.

[1] Page 56.

4-Social benefits:

The Hajj causes the Muslims to get to know each other and helps them speak with one voice.

5-Spiritual benefits:

Circumambulating the Ka‘ba, the walk between Safa and Marwa, the prayer of circumambulation, the ritual prayers, the standing on ‘Arafat are all worship. There are many other benefits of making the Hajj which are mentioned elsewhere in more detail.[1]

[1] See, for instance, the author’s *‘Ibadat al-Islam* .

7- SOME ASPECTS OF THE *SHARI'A*

In this section we shall briefly examine some of the lustrous features of the *Shari'a* of Islam namely, making oneself pure for worship, the noble sanctuaries, non-ritual prayers, congregational prayers, enjoining what is right and forbidding what is reprehensible, *i'tikaf*, calling to what is good, recalling memorable past events, the utter allegiance to the Ahl al-Bayt and disassociation from their enemies.

PURIFICATION IN ISLAM:

Question:

What is meant by making oneself pure?

Answer:

Purification in Islam is of four kinds:

1. Purifying the soul from bad tendencies, such as jealousy, miserliness, anger, cowardliness and other base qualities.
2. Purifying bodily parts from things which are incompatible with Islam, as for instance, purifying the eye from treacherous glances, purifying the tongue from idle talk and so on.
3. Purifying the body and its various parts from things which are dirty, because Islam makes it obligatory to clean oneself thoroughly from urine, blood, stools and other impurities. Also Islam commends purifying and cleansing anything which has become dirty or filthy and this does not only apply to the body but to everything with which the Muslim comes into contact in the way of clothes, tableware and cooking utensils, carpets and so on.
4. Cleaning both the body and the soul together in one of the following three circumstances:-

A. Performing ablutions after each *hadath*.

ABLUTIONS (*WUDU'*)

Question:

What is a *hadath*?

Answer:

A *hadath* applies to urinating, making stools, flatulence, sleep, (for a woman) a minor discharge of blood - *istihada qalila,* and it applies to anything which causes mental confusion such as imbibing alcoholic drinks, fainting and the like.

Question:

How should ablutions be performed?

Answer:

The manner of performing ablutions is as follows:

1. Washing the face from the hairline to the chin.
2. Washing of the right hand from the elbow to the tip of the fingers.
3. Washing of the left hand from the elbow to the tip of the fingers.
4. Wiping the front part of the head with the moisture from the underside of the right hand.
5. Wiping the top surface of the two feet with the moisture from the palms of both hands, respectively.

COMPLETE WASH (*GHUSL*)

B. A wash of the entire body, which is of two kinds:

1. Obligatory complete wash.
2. Recommended complete wash.

Question:

When is a complete wash obligatory?

Answer:

A complete wash must be taken in the following six instances:

1. *Janaba*: that is after the ejaculation of semen or penetration.
2. Menstruation: this is blood which a women usually sees being discharged once a month.
3. The discharge of blood etc (lochia) after childbirth.
4. (For a woman), discharge of blood, other than the monthly menstruation and a minor menstruation - for a full explanation reference should be made to a more detailed volume.
5. Touching a corpse: a complete wash becomes obligatory if one touches the dead body of a human being after it has grown cold and before it has been washed.
6. A dead person: it is obligatory that he or she be given a complete wash.

Question:

What are the recommended complete washes?

Answer:

There are many such as, for instance, the wash on Fridays, Festival Days[1] and on the nights of the month of Ramadan.

Question:

What is the mode of taking a complete wash?

Answer:

It can be taken in one of two ways:

1. Submersing oneself: plunging oneself once into pure water, which it is legally permissible to use (*halal*), in such a way that the water covers the whole body.
2. Washing in a certain order: firstly washing the head and neck, then the right side of the body and, after that, the left side of the body.

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[1] The *a'yad* (pl. of *'id*).

However, one who cannot perform ablutions or take a complete wash is required by Islam to do *tayammum*.

TAYAMMUM

Question:

What is that?

Answer:

Tayammum consists of:

1. Striking the palms of the two hands on clean and legally permissible earth, then shaking them and after that wiping the forehead with the two palms, from the beginning of the hairline up to the top part of the nose.
2. Wiping the upper part of the hands with the palms by first wiping the upper part of the right hand with the palm of the left hand and vice-versa.
3. Again striking the palms of the two hands on the earth and wiping the upper part of the hands with them in the way just described.

Clearly these rites of purification have to be done with the intention of seeking nearness to God and consequently they not only purify a person externally but also cleanse him or her inwardly, since seeking to draw close to God necessitates also the cleansing of the soul.

PLACES for WORSHIP

Question:

What do you mean by places for worship?

Answer:

The Prophet of Islam, Muhammad (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) says: "The ground has been made for

me a place of prostration (*masjid*) and its earth [made] pure for me"[1].

Therefore, in the view of Islam the ground everywhere is suitable for worship, and thus worship has no particular place. Moreover, in Islam, there is no place assigned for the worship of one group of people, and another set up for another group. God Almighty states:

"And turn your faces [to Him] in every place of prostration (*masjid*)"[7: 29].

However Islam has established certain places specifically for worship called mosques (*masajid*, sing. *masjid*) and encourages worship and the gathering of people in them and has promised a great reward for building them, lighting them and looking after their affairs. Praying in a mosque is preferable to praying elsewhere.

Places for worship are divided into:-

1. Places which are in the highest category of importance such as the al-Haram Mosque at Makka, the Mosque of the Prophet (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) at al-Madina, the Mosque of Kufa, (near the city of Najaf), the Mosque of Basra in the city of Basra, and the Sakhr al-Sharif (the Dome of the Rock) at Jerusalem in Palestine.

2. Places that are in the second category of importance such as the Sahla mosque near Najaf and the Baratha mosque[2] between Kadhimayn and Baghdad.

3. Places at the third level of importance which are all the other mosques which Muslims have built throughout the world. They vary one from another in status as has been explained in Islamic jurisprudence.

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[1] See *'Awali al-la'ali al-'aziziyya fi'l-ahadith al-diniyya*, Ibn Abi Jumhur Ahsa'i (born 840/1436-7), Sayyid al-Shuhada' Publishing House, Qum, 4 vols. 1405/1984-5, vol. 2, p. 208, with the addition, "wherever I happen to be and it is time for prayer, I make *tayammum* and pray".

[2] Amir al-Mu'minin 'Ali ibn Abi Talib (peace be upon him) passed by Baratha (in the vicinity of Karkh, on the western side of old Baghdad,) and prayed on the site of the present mosque.

Question:

Are there special injunctions relating to mosques?

Answer:

Indeed there are. For instance, it is forbidden to defile them and arbitrarily to demolish them. It is also forbidden for a person in a state of *janaba* or a woman in menstruation or who is in a state of lochial discharge after childbirth to sit in a mosque, and it is forbidden for those in a state of *janaba* even to pass through the al-Haram Mosque at Makka and the Mosque of the Prophet (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) in al-Madina.

HOLY SHRINES

Question:

Which are the illustrious shrines?

Answer:

These are places where the Prophet and the impeccable Imams have been buried namely:

1. The Hujra of the Prophet (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his Progeny) at al-Madina in the Hejaz.
2. Al-Baqi' cemetery at al-Madina which contains the graves of Imam al-Hasan al-Mujtaba, Imam Zayn al-'Abidin, Imam Muhammad al-Baqir and Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq (peace be upon them all). The final resting-place of Fatima al-Zahra' (peace be upon her), the best of all women, is also probably in al-Baqi'.
3. The shrine of Imam Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) in al-Najaf al-Ashraf in Iraq.
4. The shrine of Imam al-Husayn (peace be upon him) in Karbala', Iraq.
5. The shrines of Imam Musa al-Kadhim and Imam Muhammad Jawad (peace be upon both of them) in al-Kadhimiyya, Iraq.

6. The shrine of Imam 'Ali al-Rida (peace be upon him) in Mashhad in Khurasan, Iran.
7. The shrines of Imam 'Ali al-Hadi and Imam al-Hasan al-'Askari, and the underground vault of Imam al-Mahdi (peace be upon them) in Samara' in Iraq.
8. Other shrines approach to some degree the unique status of the above as, for instance, the shrine of al-'Abbas (peace be upon him) in Karbala', the shrine of Sayyida Zaynab (peace be upon her) at Damascus, and the shrines of other Prophets like the shrine of Dhu Kifl (peace be upon him), and the shrine of Musa (*Kalim-Allah* - peace be upon him).

Question:

Do these shrines enjoy a special superiority?

Answer:

Yes, for the reason that the Prophets of God and His deputies (*awsiya'uhu*) and those who are near and close to God are buried there.

Question:

Please explain some aspects of this superior status.

Answer:

The special injunctions which apply to mosques (as set out above) also apply to these holy shrines with the addition that supplications are particularly recommended in the mausoleum of Imam al-Husayn (peace be upon him). The latter is characterized by other privileges as are the rest of the shrines.

Question:

Does merely being present at these shrines also carry reward and recompense?

Answer:

Yes, for Islam has highly recommended that the Muslims visit the graves of the Prophet, his Daughter and the impeccable Imams (peace be upon them all) since such visits will receive an

abundant reward in the hereafter. Moreover Islam has specified particular occasions which are preferable to other times for such visits.

If in today's world we see that the tomb of the Unknown Soldier has become a spot to visit, thus encouraging people to defend their homeland and as a mark of esteem for the soldiers who are killed on the battlefield, so in Islam there are well-known leaders and if people only were to follow them they would acquire blessings in this world and happiness in the world to come.

Therefore we see that the shrines of the Prophet and the impeccable Imams are as a torch for Islam and the source of abundant happiness.

In particular the prayers for visiting the Prophet and the Imams are in themselves lessons and a method for right belief. For example, in one of the prayers written for the visit to the shrine of Imam Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him), 'Ali is extolled as the one who is,

"Just with the people parcelling out justice with impartiality".[1]

From this sentence we glean the principle of justice and the need to be impartial when dealing with the rights of others.

In one of the prayers written for the visit to the sanctuary of Imam al-Husayn we read:

"I bear witness that you are purity, pure and made pure and that you are from the offspring of purity, the pure and those who have been made pure. You yourself are pure and so through you the land was purified, the earth in which you lie is pure because of you, and your sanctuary is pure."[2]

We learn from this that it is incumbent upon man to make his heart, body and everything with which he comes into contact pure

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[1] See, for instance, *Mafatih al-jinan* by *'Abbas al-Qummi*, Dar al-Zahra' Beirut, first print. 1998, p.443, *ziyarat Amir al-Mu'minin ('alayhi 'l-salam)* on the Day of Ghadir: "You parcel out justice with impartiality, you are just with the people and you are more knowledgeable about God's law than the rest of mankind" [after the Holy Prophet Muhammad - peace be upon him and his progeny].

[2] *Mafatih al-jinan*, p. 515, *fi ziyarat al-Imam al-Husayn ('alayhi 'l-salam) al-makhsusa al-ula.*

and to make pure the land in which he dwells. Should not the pilgrim follow the example of Imam al-Husayn (peace be upon him) through whom the land was purified?

Question:

Are there other advantages for visiting the shrines on special occasions?

Answer:

Yes, the same benefits that were mentioned for the Hajj, since during the special occasions for visiting the shrines of the impeccable Imams, people come together from every place and so the benefits that are obtained from the Hajj (already listed above) are obtained from these visits too.

SUPPLICATION

Question:

What are meant by supplications[1] and why should we make them?

Answer:

Supplication is tantamount to the words man utters to his Creator in which he asks God for a need, expresses a grievance, praises his Lord, enumerates the blessings and benefits bestowed upon him or seeks His guidance concerning something which either he is inclined to do or has an aversion from doing.

The benefits of supplication consist in:

1. Man linking himself with the Creator of the universe.
2. Strengthening the soul since if man realizes that he is bound to God the Mighty, his soul gains strength and the strength of the soul is the source of courage and fearlessness.
3. Bringing about serenity and inner peace, for serenity diffuses happiness.

[1] *Du'a'* (non-ritual prayers) as distinct from *salat* (the five obligatory daily prayers and so on) as described above.

4. Instilling what is good in the soul and keeping the believer from bad things due to the inspiration which is got from making supplications.
5. Leading the supplicant to a recognition of what is good and what is evil since prayers elucidate this. Identification of good and evil, for invocations always contain this.
6. Moreover, God Almighty replies to supplication, just as He says in the Holy Qur'an:

"And your Lord said: Pray to me and I will answer you "[*40*: 60] and so the needs of a believer for this world and the hereafter are fulfilled.

In short, Islamic supplications are a perpetual source of learning the like of which is not found in any other faith or religion, and from which man benefits, beginning from his earliest days until the last moments of his life.

Question:

Please give an example of a supplication.

Answer:

We will mention here, as an example, parts of the supplication of Imam al-Sajjad[1] (peace be upon him) from his prayer to acquire "The most beautiful virtues"[2]:

"O God extend your sustenance upon me and do not try me by my looking at [what other people have got]; give me strength and do not afflict me with arrogance; make me Your slave and do not spoil my worship by my becoming absorbed with myself; cause me to be a means of doing good for others; do not blot out my good deeds because of my making others feel that they are indebted to me; grant that I treat others in the noblest way and protect me from self-congratulation"

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[1] Imam 'Ali Zayn al-'Abidin, the fourth imam of the Ahl al-Bayt.

[2] See *al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya al-kamila, (wa-kana min du'a'ihi 'alayhi al-salam fi makarim al-akhlaq wa-mardi 'l-af'al*), 2nd print., Beirut (al-Mu'assisa al-Dawliyya), 1999, with commentary by Ghalib 'Asayli, prayer no 20, pp. 113, 115-6.

"O God pour out Your blessings upon Muhammad and his Progeny and guide me that I combat one who has cheated me, with kindness; that I reward the one who has decided to have nothing to do with me, with munificence; that I remunerate one who has deprived me, with generosity; that I requite one who had cut off any association with me, by visiting him; and oppose one who had spoken behind my back, by speaking well of him; and may I be grateful for any favour [shown to me] and overlook anything done against me."

"O God pour out Your blessings upon Muhammad and his Progeny and I beseech You that I may not be oppressed, since you have the power to defend me; that I do not oppress [others], since you have the power to restrain me; that I am not led astray, since you are able to guide me; that I shall not be in need, since my well-being is in your hands; and that I do not maltreat [others], since any power I have is from You".

Anyone who scrutinizes the supplications of the Prophet (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) and the Imams, some of which have been included in the volumes called *al-Qur'an wa-'l-du'a'* in *Bihar al-anwar*[1], or in *Mafatih al-jinan* or *al-Sahifa al-Sajjadiyya* will realize that supplications are indeed a great treasure that can be used to make man happy both in this life and the hereafter.

CONGREGATIONAL PRAYER (*SALAT AL-JAMA'A*)

Question:

What is meant by *jama'a*?

Answer:

This is congregational prayer. Islam encourages Muslims to offer together their five daily prayers in congregation behind an imam, on condition that he is just, which means that he must be someone sincere in his religion. Throughout the Islamic World from the time of the Prophet, who was the one to establish

[1] The encyclopaedic work by the 17th century 'Allama Muhammad Baqir al-Majlisi, published (110 volumes) in Beirut, 2nd revised edition, 1983. The specific section referred to is *Kitab al-dhikr wa-'l-du'a'* found in vol. 90 (pp. 148 to end) and embraces also vols. 91 and 92.

congregational prayers, until today Muslims have gathered early in the morning to pray together the dawn prayer, at noon for the noon and afternoon prayers and at sunset for the sunset and early evening prayers.

They usually gather in specific places, such as the shrines of the Imams and in mosques, and prayer behind one of the Muslims whom they know to lead a good and upright life and they perform their obligatory prayers doing what he does in the way of standing, sitting, bowing and prostrating.

Question:

What do we gain from praying together?

Answer:

The benefits of congregational prayer are many and they include:-

1. Unifying the Muslims in a practical way: every day a Muslim with great responsibilities stands next to a subordinate, a white Muslim next to a black one, a rich Muslim next to a poor one and so on, all before the one Lord, no one being distinguishable from another. At these times all share similar sentiments. Class and other distinctions disappear and from this can come nothing but good.

2. Cooperation will occur when Muslims meet together, since everyone will get to know each other individually, friends will then help each other when help is needed and there will be general concern if someone is absent or going through difficult times.

3. Inculcating discipline in the hearts of those who are praying, for congregation is one of the best forms of discipline. If it becomes ingrained in the character of a Muslim he will be organized in all his doings.

4. Benefiting from homilies and guidance which are given to the congregation before the prayers or, as is usually the case, afterwards. Muslims in these congregations are made aware of the calamities that beset the Muslims throughout the world so as to get them to participate, not

only with their hearts in the grief of those who have been afflicted, but also to participate by doing something practically. Therefore we notice that those who are in the habit of praying together are highly informed about religion and we also notice that, as a consequence of the sermons and homilies which are delivered on these occasions, those who pray congregational prayers are more upright and scrupulous than others in the various fields of life. The benefits accruing from praying in congregation continue to this day.

ENJOINING WHAT IS GOOD and FORBIDDING WHAT IS REPREHENSIBLE

Question:

What does this mean?

Answer:

Islam enjoins what is good, whether it is to make something obligatory or to cause something to be recommended. The good which Islam enjoins is called *ma'ruf*.

Similarly, it also forbids what is reprehensible, either by causing certain things to be absolutely forbidden or by saying that certain actions are best kept away from. Bad things are called *munkar*.

Consequently Islam has ordered Muslims to enjoin what is *ma'ruf* (good things) and forbid *munkar* (bad actions). Thus, with this law the deviations in any community are set straight, people are guided towards correct Islamic behaviour and they are saved from evil things and crimes.

In the Qur'an, God says: "You are the best of peoples ever raised up for mankind, you enjoin what is good and you forbid what is reprehensible"[*3*: 110].

The Prophet Muhammad (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) likened enjoining good and forbidding what is reprehensible to a person in a boat who, while at sea, starts making a hole in it. If the other passengers grab hold of him, he and they will be saved but if they leave him to carry on, both he and they will perish

Imam Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) said: "See to it that you command what is good (*ma'ruf*) and forbid what is reprehensible (*munkar*) otherwise the evil amongst you will surely gain the upper hand, whereupon you will ask God to help you but your prayers will not be granted"[1].

I'TIKAF

Question:

What is *i'tikaf*?

Answer:

I'tikaf consists of staying in the mosque for a period of three days or more during which the Muslim fasts in the daytime and refrains from doing many things which would be incompatible with achieving nearness to God, and also does not leave the mosque except for the performance of necessities.

Question:

What is the benefit of *i'tikaf*?

Answer:

Its benefit is to raise the soul upwards to spiritual things and to break the individual from those physical attachments which smear clear thinking. It is a time of recuperation and rest so as to cleanse the body and purify the soul.

At the present day we see that people, even the heads of governments, withdraw from their work for a period of recuperation, so that they may have an opportunity for relaxing and reflecting. They go to a house in the country or to the seaside and elsewhere in order to regain their energy and think about their problems away from the hubbub of life. *I'tikaf* is better than doing this because:

1. While doing *i'tikaf* you are fasting, some of the benefits of which have already been mentioned.

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[1] A similar exhortation is in Nahj al-balagha p. 362, but with a slight difference at the beginning viz. "Do not abandon the commanding of what is good and the forbidding of what is reprehensible …………..".

2. *I'tikaf* involves focusing oneself on God who is the source of every good and the inspiration of every serenity and inner peace.
3. *I'tikaf* is carried out in a mosque which is in itself a place of obedience, worship, truthfulness and purity, free from transgressions and evil acts.

It has been scientifically demonstrated that place influences the human spirit and can, according to what sort of place it is, be a positive influence for good or for evil.

PROPAGATING GOOD

Question:

What is meant by propagating good?

Answer:

Islam has named every noble action "good" (*khayr*) and has enjoined people to invite others towards goodness. God Almighty says, "Let there arise out of you a group of people inviting to all that is good"[*3*: 104], just as He enjoined people to do good things themselves.

Indeed in Islam, in addition to this, there is a reward for someone who guides to what is good exactly as there is for one who actually performs that act himself for as the Prophet (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) says, "He who points the way to something that is good is as if he performs [the good action himself]"[1].

Good action are divided into two categories:

1. Good deeds that Islam has specifically designated such as prayers, coming to the aid of the needy and feeding the hungry.
2. Good works which are covered by the general principles laid out by Islam, even if Islam has not made a specific stipulation for them, such as building schools and hospitals, establishing charities for providing clothes and

[1] See *Kanz al-'ummal*, vol. 16, p. 359, *hadith* 16052 and *Bihar al-anwar*, vol. 71, p. 409.

food for the needy, facilitating marriage contracts and so on.

Therefore in the view of Islam, a Muslim is a person who does good and at the same enjoins good to the extent that the Prophet (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) says: "Removing something from the road that might cause injury is a good deed"[1].

Surely if human beings would act upon the directions of Islam in doing good and propagating what is good, no one would be in need and the world would be changed into a paradise of well-being where goodness, prosperity and friendship would prevail throughout the earth.

COMMEMORATIONS

Question:

What is meant by commemorations?

Answer:

Islam has made the holding of celebrations and commemorations in memory of the Prophet and the impeccable Imams, whether it is for happy events, like their birthdays, or for sad ones, like the days on which they died, something that is recommended and highly desirable. In a *hadith* it is related that, "Our followers are from us, they are joyful in our joy and are grieved in our grief"[2]

Question:

What benefit do these commemorations have?

Answer:

The many benefits they have include:

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[1] See *Bihar al-Anwar*, vol. 72, p. 50.

[2] See *Ghurur al-hikam wa-durar al-kalim*, 'Abd al-Wahid al-Amidi (fl. 5/11th century), 1st print., Beirut, 1987, part 1, p. 227, *hadith* no 178: " Almighty God looked upon the Earth and chose us and selected for us followers (*shi'a*) who will come to our aid and will be joyful when we are joyful, will grieve when we are grieved and will expend of themselves and their possessions for our sake. Those [people] are from us and will return to us and they will be with us in Paradise".

1. Encouraging the good. If people see that the good and upright are the object of respect then their souls are inclined towards good, so that they in turn may also generate respect. Just as these commemorations are an encouragement towards good and laudable deeds so they also arouse an aversion to what is bad and reprehensible

2. Creating role models. If man has a personal esteem for someone, he will take him as a role model and will try to make his own life conform to the qualities of whom he is in awe. This is because in man's character there is a tendency towards spiritual advancement and the raising of oneself towards the ranks of those who are at the peaks of humanity and at the highest level of nobility and virtue.

3. Appreciating those who are concerned with the betterment of society. Such people are by right the object of respect, be it during their lifetime or after their demise.

4. In addition, these commemorations usually involve people gathering together and the holding of seminars and lectures and so there accrue from them benefits for the community, some of which we have already mentioned with regard to the Pilgrimage to Makka and praying in congregation. Moreover these gatherings are usually not simply commemorations but also contain aspects of guidance and admonition so that the benefit is two-fold: the benefit from the actual event and the benefit obtained from spiritual instruction.

5. If such a gathering is accompanied by colourful decorations when celebrating a joyful occasion and by black ones for sorrowful commemorations, this will have a greater impact because then the eye participates with the ear in the quest for understanding and inspiration and so the response to what is good and the aversion to what is bad will be stronger.

Question:

Can you give some examples of commemorations?

Answer:

For instance:

1. The Birthday of the Holy Prophet, of Fatima al-Zahra' and the 12 Imams (peace and blessings be upon them all).
2. The Festival (*'Id*) of al-Mab'ath[1] when the Prophet (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) was told by God to commence his Prophetic Mission to the people - on 27th Rajab[2].
3. The demise of the Prophet, Fatima al-Zahra', and 11 of the impeccable Imams (peace and blessings be upon them all).
4. The Festival of Ghadir ('Id al-Ghadir) when at a place called Ghadir Khumm the Prophet (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) appointed 'Ali ibn Abi Talib as his *khalifa* (successor) over the Muslims - on 18th Dhu 'l-Hijja[3].
5. The Islamic festivals of 'Id al-Fitr (breaking of the fast) on 1st Shawwal[4] and 'Id al-Adha (the festival of Sacrifice) on 10th Dhu 'l-Hijja.
6. One of the days of grief is the Arba'in, the fortieth day of mourning for Imam al-Husayn, on the 20th Safar[5].

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[1] 13 years before the Hijra (when the Prophet Muhammad moved from Makka to al-Madina).

[2] This was in Makka.

[3] Ghadir Khumm is the name of a pool between Makka and al-Madina. The event took place in the year 10/632 when the Holy Prophet was on his way back to al-Madina, having performed his Farewell Hajj.

[4] The day after the fasting month of Ramadan.

[5] The fortieth day after the martyrdom of Imam al-Husayn at Karbala' on 10th Muharram 61/680, the 1st month of the Muslim calendar, (Safar is the 2nd).

TAWALLI and TABARRI

Question:

What is the meaning of *tawalli* and *tabarri.*

Answer:

If a person loves someone he will become close to him, and when he becomes close to someone then he will follow his example in his deeds and words. Similarly if he hates someone he will keep away from him and when he shuns him he will also oppose and be different from him in what he does and says. Thus love and taking someone as an example to be followed are called *tawalli* (amity), and dislike and keeping distant from someone are called *tabarri* (hostility).

Question:

To whom should we display real friendship and to whom should we display hostility?

Answer:

We ought to show amity towards God, His Prophets, the Imams and the God-fearing, and hostility towards the enemies of God, of His Prophets, the Imams and those closest to Him. We should do this because one who truly loves God will become nearer in his heart and in his actions to the pious, will obey them, and in so doing will gain well-being in this world and success in the hereafter.

Similarly, if one displays hostility towards the enemies of the God-fearing he will also keep himself away from them, have nothing to do with them and contradict them in his actions and in all his doings. Consequently he will not be made wretched like those people. Moreover, man must satisfy inevitably his inner instincts which include love and aversion, for there are three categories of people:

1. Those among God's servants who truly fear Him.
2. The enemies of God and the enemies of the God-fearing.
3. Those who are neither with God or with His enemies, like the ignorant who are incapable of distinguishing

truth or some of those who live in remote villages or desert places.

If man wants to fulfil his instinct for love he should channel it towards someone who is of beautiful character, whose friendship is beneficial, and if he wants to fulfil his instinct for enmity he should direct that towards someone who is of ugly nature with whom to make friendship would be dangerous and harmful.

Therefore, as we have outlined, adopting amity and hostility is, firstly, the way to satisfy these instincts which have to be expressed and, secondly, one will obtain benefit from such a stance in this world and in the hereafter

Question:

Can instincts be fulfilled?

Answer:

Any instinct be it love, hate, grief, joy, courage and so on has, like the stomach, to be satisfied. Islam has made clear what is the best nourishment for these instincts so that man will be aware of what makes him happy and what causes him distress and thus he will follow what is beneficial and discard what is harmful.

8-Freedom in Islam

Question:

Does freedom exist in Islam?

Answer:

Of all the concepts of freedom that exist within the various religions and legal systems, the most extensive are found in Islam.

Islam indeed is a religion of freedom in every sense of the word.

Question:

Is there proof of this claim from the Qur'an and the *sunna*?

Answer:

Yes, indeed. With regard to the Qur'an it describes the Prophet of Islam as he who, "Makes lawful for them the good things and makes forbidden for them what is bad and he removes from them their burdens and the fetters that were upon them" [*7*: 157].

The encumbrances and social shackles that lay upon the necks of the people and had stifled their freedom were removed by the Prophet who thus liberated them and gave them their freedom after restrictions and ignorance had made them slaves.

THE LIMITS TO FREEDOM

As for the pure *sunna*, the famous rule in the books of jurisprudence, extracted from the Qur'an and the *hadith* is: "People are given charge over themselves and what they own"[1]. Therefore anyone can do as he wishes with regard to his own body or his own possessions but on the condition that what he does is not forbidden by the Islamic *Shari'a*.

Question:

Give examples of actions which are forbidden in the *Shari'a*.

[1] See also *al-'Awali al-la'ali,* part 1, p. 222, *hadith* 99.

Answer:

Forbidden actions regarding one's own body include killing oneself (that is to commit suicide), cutting off a limb like one's own arm, or destroying a faculty like blinding oneself or making oneself deaf.

Forbidden action with regard to one's possessions is as if someone destroys his wealth by throwing it into the sea or burning the banknotes he has, and so on. It is also forbidden to spend one's money on something unlawful such as alcoholic drinks or on unlawful sex or gambling. Since the actions which are forbidden by the *Shari'a* are very few indeed, each one of them having been made unlawful for the good of the individual or society, the things that one is permitted to do with one's own body or one's wealth and possessions are consequently numerous, to an extent never found in any other religious system or code of laws.

KINDS OF FREEDOM

Question:

What kinds of freedom exist in Islam?

Answer:

The kinds of freedom that exist in Islam are so numerous that it would be difficult to list them all. We will, however, enumerate here ten of them since they cover in some way most of the other kinds.

1-Freedom of Trade:

Any person can trade with any commodity he wishes, except unlawful commodities such as alcoholic beverages and pork, whenever he wishes. He can export goods to anywhere he wants and similarly import them without paying any customs dues and without any border restrictions.

2-Freedom of Agriculture:

This law permits any person to cultivate as much as he wants and over as much land as he wishes, with complete freedom

and without any taxes or limitations for the *hadith* says, “The Earth belongs to God and to whoever utilizes it”.

3-Freedom of Industry:

A person can import or export, establish a factory or import and export factories of any kind and can manufacture things without any taxes, conditions or limitations.

4-The Freedom to Possess Common Resources:

Land, water and air all belong to God, and man is permitted to extract from them the resources they contain, be they fish from the sea, mineral deposits, treasures in the earth, woods of the forests, atoms in space and any other resources that have been placed in the universe.

5-Freedom of Development:

Anyone can develop the land by building on it, constructing canals, digging wells, or any other beneficial enterprise on the basis of the principle mentioned above, “The Earth belongs to God and to whoever utilizes it”.

6-Freedom of Travel:

A person is free to travel to any place that he wishes without a visa, or the need to obtain permission, or the payment of any tax, and no one has the right to prevent him from travelling to such a place.

Similarly, man is free to travel for as long as he likes, with no limitation on the period of travel for Islam does not believe in frontiers since the Earth belongs to God and man can travel in it how he wishes.

More than that, Islam has established a special account for travellers who cannot journey further because they have run out of money, and so forth, and this is to encourage people to travel.

7-Freedom of Residence:

Man is free to reside wherever he wishes without any conditions or limitations since passports, identity cards and

the concept of nationality are entirely irrelevant in Islam and all people have a right to unrestricted freedom of movement.

8-Freedom of Speech:

Everyone has the right to say and disseminate what he wishes, without any restriction or condition being imposed upon him, except that what he says must not be forbidden in itself like abusive language, backbiting and slandering.

9-Freedom of Writing and Publishing:

Anyone is free to write, print and publish and propagate whatever he wishes but on the condition that there is nothing in it which is forbidden in the *Shari'a*, just as has been mentioned regarding freedom of speech.

10-Freedom to have Several Jobs at the Same Time:

If a man wants to do particular work different from the job or profession he is currently engaged in, this should not be disallowed, as is the case in certain countries where the law forbids pursuing two careers at the same time: being a government employee and also a merchant, for instance.

Question:

Did Muslims enjoy all this freedom before the collapse of Islamic governments?

Answer:

Yes, Muslims and non-Muslims alike under Islamic rule enjoyed this freedom except for certain untypical periods when part of this freedom was suppressed due to tyranny and the like, not as the result of a law or decree. However, suppression and the stifling of freedom actually being enshrined in laws ratified by governments, and tolls and dues being imposed upon liberty and freedom as if these were crimes, are all phenomena which did not exist except after the collapse of Islamic governments.

The West has now seized the leadership of the world and has brought a thousand restrictions and has perpetuated a thousand repressions. What is truly amazing is that the West after all this, claims that she is the bestower of freedom upon humanity and the one who is releasing mankind from its fetters.

9- ISLAMIC ECONOMICS

Question:

Has Islam a special economic system?

Answer:

A healthy and free economic system exists only in Islam whereas the economic systems dominant in today's world are not healthy due to one of these factors:

1. Either the system is corrupt in that it enables some to acquire millions beyond imagination, while others are dragged down to the lowest level of poverty and die in their thousands every day from hunger and nakedness.
2. Or the system is stifling and repressive since it does away with private ownership with the result that an individual lives in dire poverty.

Question:

What is an Islamic economic system like?

Answer:

The description of an Islamic economy requires several large volumes, so we will simply outline here the general basic principles that Islam has set out for dispelling poverty and need from society and raising the standard of living, which are as follows:

1-The broadening of freedom in all aspects of life:

Since people enjoyed freedom under an Islamic government, as was pointed out in the previous chapter, they would work hard and with sincerity and the road to prosperity was open to them. So they would enrich themselves and rarely would there be found among them anyone in need. This is because, as is well-known, the basic methods of acquiring wealth were permitted in every respect and no taxes or tolls were imposed upon them, nor restrictions or conditions.

So everyone would be busy and be working and his work would be his means of sustenance and his income would exceed what he needed. However under secular legal-systems:

1. The sources of wealth are restricted and profiting from them is not open to all.
2. What is allowed to be profited from is subject to taxes and other dues.
3. The mere making of a profit is bound up with restrictions and conditions. Rarely, therefore, is one able to benefit from the basic sources of wealth and even if one can, conditions and taxes are imposed upon any gain one might make. Indeed if we say that these restrictions have reduced the level of the creation of wealth to 20% of what it should be, we have not exaggerated.

Take the example of Iraq. Under Islamic governments it was flourishing with agriculture and development projects but now under non-Islamic rule only a small part of Iraq is prosperous and the rest of it is in ruin. Whereas under Islamic governments 40 million people were living off its resources, its population today barely reaches 8 million[1].

2-The Structural Simplicity of Islamic Government:

A fine example of this simplicity can be seen at the time Iraq came under Islamic rule when only three people went there from Medina to govern the country.

The secret of this simplicity is that the apparatus of government is there in the first instance to ensure that there is justice among the people, secondly to protect the country from its enemies and thirdly to bring about greater prosperity throughout the land.

Moreover, Islamic government is :

1. Popular government to the highest degree.

[1] This is, of course, an out of date statistic (the book was compiled in the mid-1960s) and the present population of Iraq is estimated to be around 22 million.

2. Does not recognize the restrictions which only lead to a plethora of departments.
3. Opposes bureaucracy and strives to solve problems speedily.
4. Creates a climate of trust among the people by demonstrating what having faith and a conscience should entail.

In this manner, Islamic government does not need numerous departments and so its employees are few in number which means that the wealth at its disposal is considerable. This in turn brings about a growth in the economy for two reasons:

1. The government employee generally does not generate his own income but instead is dependent in the long run on the labour of others. Therefore if the number of employees is reduced the money that otherwise would have to be spent on paying salaries can be saved, and the government will consequently have more money at its disposal and can direct its attention to other vital projects.
2. Those who are not employed by the state work for themselves and generate wealth, whereas if they were employed by the state they become, in effect, consumers.

For example: If there are 10 people in a house and each one earns 1 dinar and then the government employs 5 of them, the money being generated will be 5 dinars to be shared among 10 people, whereas if there were only 1 employed among them, the income generated would be 9 dinars to be shared among 10 people.

3- The Treasury:

Khums, *zakat*, *jizya* and *kharaj* were collected for the treasury, the first three categories having already been explained.

Kharaj is the yield from those lands which are in the possession of the state or which have been acquired by the Muslims by virtue of war and so forth.

The duty of the treasury is twofold:

1. To meet all the needs of the people.
2. To look after every aspect of the welfare of the people.

For example, the treasury gives money to a poor man so that he can be free of want; to a traveller in need so that he can return home; to an unmarried man so that he can get married; to someone who is sick who cannot afford treatment so that he can get well; to someone who does not have any capital to start a project so that he can make a living; to someone who needs a house to live in, in order that he might build one; to someone who wants to embark upon a course of study but has not got enough money so that he is able to do so - and so on and so on.

In short, every person in need approaches the treasury which is then obliged to help him out of duty and so this help is not like a donation or act of piety. From another aspect, it is incumbent upon the treasury to look after the welfare of the Muslim community as a whole by, for example, building roads and illuminating them efficiently, establishing hospitals, opening schools and building mosques.

As a result no one will remain in need nor will there be any aspect of the public good inadequately funded.

With these three things to which we have alluded: the extension of freedom, the simplicity of the machinery of government and the institution of the treasury, Islam is able to make society more prosperous and so the Islamic economic system is the best system and differs from capitalism, wherein the distribution of wealth is unbalanced, and from a communist economy which does not attend to the priorities and real needs of the people.

10-PEACE IN ISLAM

Question:

Is Islam a religion of peace or a religion of war?

Answer:

Islam is a religion of peace and not of war and the proof of this are God's words in the Qur'an: "O you who believe, enter all of you into peace"[*2*: 208], also "And if they are disposed towards peace, you, also, be so disposed"[*8*: 61].

Question:

So does Islam say you must submit when confronted with an oppressor or aggressor?

Answer:

Certainly not, for Islam is a religion of reason and justice and therefore submission and capitulation are not permissible and thus God says: "... whoever then acts aggressively against you, inflict aggression upon him in the same way that he had inflicted it upon you"[*2*: 194]; and says:

"Permission [to retaliate] is given to those upon whom war is made because they are oppressed, and most surely God is able to grant them victory"[*22*: 39]; God also says:

"And if you retaliate, then do so in the same way that you were treated"[*16*: 126].

Question:

If Islam is the religion of peace, then why did it consider fighting non-Muslims to be permissible and why did the Prophet of Islam fight them?

Answer:

All the battles of the Prophet (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) are characterized by their having been defensive battles and not battles of aggression. He did not fight

because he loved power for its own sake or because he wanted to acquire territory and colonize it.

Question:

Does Islam ever consider starting fighting to be lawful?

Answer:

Yes, but only under two conditions:

1. If the fighting is for the sake of God in order to deliver people from harmful beliefs and defiled social and moral practices.
2. If it is for the sake of the downtrodden: to deliver people who are suffering from suppression and tyranny at the hands of tyrants and oppressors.

These two principles have been enunciated in the Holy Qur'an thus:

"And what prevents you from fighting for the sake of God and for the oppressed men, women, and children?"[*4*: 75].

Question:

In brief, what are the differences between an Islamic war and a non- Islamic one?

Answer:

They can be summed up as follows:

1-Islam fights only for the deliverance of human beings:

a) Delivering men from superstitious, dangerous beliefs, corrupt behaviour and saving the oppressed from those who exploit them

b) To ward off attack, be it from abroad or from a rebellion against Islam from within.

2-Islam, if it engages in conflict observes the strictest ethical conduct:

a) It does not harm women, children, those who are not involved in the conflict, old men, and similar categories of non-combatants.

b) It does not cut off the supply of water or poison it, cut down trees, and so on.

c) As far as possible, it refrains from killing.

d) After gaining the upper-hand it grants a general amnesty, just as the Holy Prophet (God's blessings and peace be upon him and his progeny) did in the case of the people of Makka and 'Ali (peace be upon him) did with the inhabitants of Basra.

3-Exemplary behaviour after victory:

a) Applying justice everywhere scrupulously.

b) Islam does not exploit the country but enables the inhabitants to benefit from its resources.

c) Does not impose from outside a ruler over the people but instead enables someone from the indigenous populace to rule the country if he possesses the necessary qualities.

d) Gives complete freedom and equality to the people, as has already been indicated.

As for non-Islamic conflicts, they are not waged to save people from their plight but rather to gain control over them. The victors after gaining power are set on a policy of killing, exploitation and oppression.

What we have said regarding wars waged in the name of Islam and non-Islamic conflicts is not mere propaganda but is substantiated by history. We should add that those wars and battles carried out in the name of Islam but which, however, do not conform to the Islamic principles outlined above, are to be considered aberrations.

11-POLITICS IN ISLAM

Question:

Does Islam have a political system?

Answer:

Yes, since Islam, as we have seen, is concerned both with the spiritual affairs of man and also with the life in this world. Islam has something to say about all man's needs and adopts a clear position regarding every issue.

Question:

What do you mean by Islamic politics?

Answer:

To go into detail about Islamic government would require a large volume so here we shall summarize the main principles involved, addressing the following questions:

1. Who should lead an Islamic state?
2. How should government in Islam be carried out?
3. What is the system of government?

Question:

Who then should lead an Islamic state?

Answer:

The head of state is someone who fulfils these conditions:

1. He must have reached the age of legal maturity, is sane, is a freeman, a male, legitimate in birth and a man of faith.
2. He must be knowledgeable about worldly and spiritual affairs.
3. He must be scrupulously just.

Many jurists also stipulate that he should be the most knowledgeable of the religious scholars of his day.

Question:

What does Islamic government entail?

Answer:

An Islamic government is concerned with spiritual and material affairs equally, which means that an Islamic ruler rules in the name of God, not in his own right or in the name of any aristocracy. The advantage of such a government lies in the following:

1. It fills the spiritual vacuum in society since rule is not distributed between a "spiritual authority" and a "worldly authority" but is, rather, one authority representing both aspects of government together.
2. It is not possible for the ruler to become corrupt since if he does he will be exposed immediately, for religion has its own laws which cannot be changed nor be substituted nor be adjusted.
3. It strengthens the relationship between the people and the government, which results in complete cooperation since people have a spiritual side to their nature. Even if someone proclaims that he is not religious he means that he is not committed to God's laws not that he has absolutely no religion or spirituality, for the meaning of religion is that particular ethical path which an individual chooses to follow in life. Therefore if a government can itself unite both religious and worldly authority, everyone should feel some empathy with it.
4. Following from the above, such a government will last longer since a government based upon spiritual principles has greater staying power and lasts longer than a secular one.

Question:

Describe an Islamic system of government.

Answer:

This question needs ideally a detailed survey of the various institutions which appertain to such a government but suffice it

here to outline some of them and some of the factors that will take priority in a system founded upon Islam:

1. The judiciary.
2. The army.
3. The treasury.
4. Freedom in its various forms.
5. Solving disputes and problems.
6. The prosperity of the nation.

Of these six items, the first three are among the basic constituents of any nation since the law exists to enforce justice within the country, the army to repel an enemy and the like and a treasury is required to provide for the judiciary, the army and other institutions. The last three concern the welfare of the nation and its progress.

Question:

How does Islam regard the judiciary?

Answer:

The judiciary in Islam is uncomplicated, speedy and free of charge. One judge is sufficient to deal with the litigations of a large town in the simplest fashion by people merely having to report to him for a ruling and, moreover, without paying any legal charges. The plaintiff is asked if he has evidence for what he alleges. If he has, then judgement is given accordingly and if he cannot produce evidence, then judgement will be in favour of the defendant. Once the judgement has been announced this is the end of the case. In this way one judge was sufficient for the needs of a large city like al-Kufa for a period of almost half a century.

Question:

What about the army in Islam?

Answer:

The army in Islam as we gather from various authorities is open to all and you join it by choice and it is not a great burden on

those who join. The ruler establishes camps outside the cities, sets up the necessary facilities and commends the idea of military training to the people. It is clear that the kind of training envisaged will be popular and there will be great response seeing that a man will only be required to give up a portion of each day for military service, whereas for the remaining hours he is free to busy himself as he chooses. Also military expenditure will not overburden the government since all it will have to provide are the essential requirements. The concept of the army in Islam even in a modern context can be likened to a sports team.

Question:

Describe the treasury in an Islamic state.

Answer:

As has already been noted, taxes in Islam are restricted to *khums*, *zakat*, *jizya* and *kharaj* which are all sent to the Treasury and from this money the various organs of an Islamic state are funded. Seeing that the administration of the state is run so simply, it does not need that much money and therefore the people under an Islamic government are happy since they do not have to pay tax and the government is content because the burden of expenditure is not heavy.

Question:

What do you mean when you speak of freedom within Islam?

Answer:

Since the apparatus of an Islamic government is uncomplicated, the people correspondingly enjoy the maximum freedom and thus they have a free unrestricted rein when it comes to farming, trading, industry, travelling, building, where to live, the possession of anything that is permissible (from the standpoint of the *Shari'a*) and so forth. For all this freedom there are no taxes to pay and similarly there is no obligatory work to do such as military service. Man's needs are met simply and in the same way the judiciary is run on uncomplicated lines and so are trade transactions and those involving pawning and renting and the like. For instance, buying and selling is carried out speedily and can be summed up by the seller saying, "I sell (something or

other)", or to that effect, and the reply of the purchaser, "I accept" and then writing down on an ordinary piece of paper what has been transacted with the signature of two witnesses. This simplicity is a common feature of life in an Islamic state.

Question:

How does Islam deal with the problems of the people?

Answer:

Because Islam only recognizes the existence of crucial problems, does not impose any taxes upon commodities or work and also the fact that the apparatus of government is kept to a minimum, the problems you see today in the nations around the world would not exist under Islamic rule. Only issues of prime significance will remain, such as judicial proceedings, criminal offences and, thirdly, actions which are contrary to Islamic law such as building a house that overlooks another and the like, theft, murder, drinking alcohol and so on. These three categories are dealt with speedily by Islam to the extent that they should no longer be regarded as problems at all. Consequently one judge is enough for a whole town. His responsibility is to make a judgement in legal disputes, look after money belonging to orphans, oversee the *awqaf* (religious estates) and witness trade transactions and business agreements and appoint an official to carry out judicial punishments. Another factor is that the number of prisons in an Islamic state is very small and so it is true to say that the people under Islamic rule have no intractable problems to confront and consequently they can busy themselves with their own affairs with a sense of serenity and peace of mind.

Question:

How can Islam make a nation progress?

Answer:

There are several factors for Islam being able to do this which can be summarized in the following basic principles:

1. The simplicity of the government apparatus.
2. Encouragement.
3. Mutual cooperation.

Concerning the apparatus of government in Islam, I have already pointed out some of its aspects. Historians have mentioned that the number of top officials sufficient to rule an Islamic state need not exceed 50 for every million or so inhabitants. Islam does not see the necessity for the existence of many of the departments considered as being essential by the governments of the nations of today, because it prefers to have things done in an uncomplicated fashion.

Thus an Islamic state does not unduly make issues intricate nor protract them so that it has to have numerous officials and similarly it delegates many tasks to the people themselves. These tasks therefore are not monopolized by the government causing it, in turn, to create more departments which would not only be a considerable burden upon it but would also mean having to take people away from the private sector.

As for encouragement, Islam encourages knowledge and work to an extent not found in any other religion or legal system. It makes "seeking knowledge an obligation for every Muslim" and both for the scholar and the manual worker it promises an astonishing amount of merit in the hereafter.

So those who are religious possess two forces that will lead to the advance of human affairs: a worldly potential which is also present in non-Muslim societies and a religious, spiritual power which others do not possess and this truth is indicated in the words of the Almighty, "And you hope from God what they do not hope"[*4*: 104].

Thirdly, concerning mutual cooperation: an Islamic government cooperates with the people in order to bring about a thriving society and a more prosperous nation just as Imam Amir al-Mu'minin (peace be upon him) directed Malik al-Ashtar when he appointed him his governor over Egypt [*ca.* 37/658] during his glorious period of rule, and there are many other examples.

Since an Islamic government is sure to pursue the policies outlined above, the state cannot help but achieve a remarkable degree of advancement. We have thus summed up what we mean by politics seen from an Islamic perspective. A detailed survey is not possible here but we have allocated a special work to this topic.

12-SOCIETY IN ISLAM

Question:

Does Islamic society have a specific structure?

Answer:

The various units of society adapt themselves to each other according to how a particular society is governed. Sometimes those governing society make allowances for the basic instincts of man and at other times they ignore them.

Since Islam is the religion which responds to the innate nature of man, it takes into account this inherent disposition in all its laws and so promotes what is good and forbids what is bad. If we look at society at the present time, we notice the following elements and phenomena:

1. The family.
2. People who work in trade or business.
3. The school and education.
4. Worship.
5. Religious festivals.
6. Government employment.
7. Social gatherings like the meeting together of friends, weddings, travelling together, funeral gatherings and so on.
8. The army.
9. Relations between the government and the people.
10. Temporary sharecropping.

1-The family:

Each member of a family has his or her particular responsibilities, so a husband has his responsibilities and a wife hers and both of them have responsibilities towards the children, just as the children have towards their parents. Taking the word family to

comprise also relatives, then they all have responsibilities and duties towards one another which are not confined to particular circumstances or occasions but are general in application.

Some matters regarding the family (according to the five principles into which human actions fall) are obligatory, some recommended, some forbidden and some are disapproved of and some permitted. For example Islam has set out rules regarding getting married: the obligation on the husband to provide for his family, the duty of the wife to obey her husband, correct behaviour within the house, the way to bring up children, what names to give them and other matters concerning them.

2- Business and trade:

Islam has clarified the conditions and rules relating to running a business whether it is a matter concerning the customer, or between two parties regarding a purchase, mortgage, making out a contract for renting and so on.

3-Education:

Islam has a particular view regarding education, culture, the conditions for becoming a teacher, how a student should behave, the characteristics of an Islamic education and what should be its aims. Evidence for Islam's concern for education is that the "Second Martyr"[1] (*al-Shahid al-Thani*), may God be pleased with him, wrote a book on this subject entitled, "*Munyat al-murid fi adab al-mufid wa-'l-mustafid*" [2].

4-Worship:

Islam has set out specific laws regarding worship, has clarified how prayers in congregation are to be carried out and what kind of place is suitable for such prayers. It has also detailed the characteristics of a mosque and the conditions for being an imam and has stressed the obligation of the believers to interrelate affectionately with one another and with the imam, and so on.

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[1] The author is referring to Shaykh Zayn al-Din b. Nur al-Din al-'Amili who was murdered in 966/1559 while travelling to Istanbul. About 80 works are attributed to him.

[2] "What an aspirant desires concerning the conduct of a teacher and that of his pupil."

5-Religious festivals:

Joyful festivals and occasions for grief, the Hajj, visits to the shrines of the Holy Prophet and the impeccable Imams: all have a special place in Islam and each occasion has its particular character, rites and special spiritual benefits for which scholars have compiled numerous works as, for instance, the *Hajj* of the *Jawahir*[1], *Kamil al-ziyarat*[2] and the *Mazar* of the *Bihar*[3].

6-Employment in government service:

I am referring here to the social aspects of such employment, that is to say what is entailed in holding a post close to the government and also the qualities that a judge should possess and those who work under him as well as any specific employment that directly affects the well-being of society.

7-Social gatherings:

Islam gives great importance to these from the point of view of correct procedure: how best these should be conducted and everything appertaining to them. One of the scholars has even written a specific treatise about this called, "The book of social relations" (*Kitab al-'Ishra*)[4].

8-Army:

From the social aspects, both when in camp and on the move: how the army should conduct itself, what is involved in the army's obeying its commander-in chief and how such a commander must treat his men. Islam deals with all these points and a special section in jurisprudence has been allocated to them called "The Book of Jihad"[5].

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[1] A reference to pp. 80-110 of vol.20 of *Jawahir al-kalam fi sharh shara'i' al-Islam* by Muhammad Hasan al-Najafi (d. 1266/1850), Beirut, 1981, (43 volumes).
[2] By Ja'far ibn Quluye al-Qummi (d. 369/979), Najaf, 1356/1937-8.
[3] The *Kitab al-mazar* of *Bihar al-anwar* by 'Allama al-Majlisi, which embraces vol. 97 (pp. 101 to end) and vols. 98 and 99.
[4] Vols. 109 and 110 of the author's "Encyclopaedia of Jurisprudence" (*Mawsu'a al-fiqh*) are entitled *Kitab al-ijtima'*.
[5] Vols. 47 and 48 of the author's *mawsu'a* are devoted to this topic.

9-Temporary sharecropping:

This has its own procedures, conditions and characteristics such as how contracts between the sharecroppers are retained, the forms of the sharecropping contract, the share of the cultivator in the farm produce, how he is employed, his rights and the rights of the owner of the farm, and so on.

10-Finally, Islam has clarified the rights of the ruler with regard to the people, the rights of the people with regard to the ruler and the relationship which should exist between both of them.

In short, what is called today "Sociology" has already received exhaustive treatment in Islam. Society according to Islam should be characterized by the following features:-

1. The promotion of a healthy state of affairs in every aspect of life.
2. Total mutual trust throughout society.
3. The greatest degree of tranquillity and calm.

This is thanks to the vitality and reasonableness of the programme which Islam has drawn up in detail for human society and which has to be put into practice if what is desired is a life of well-being and happiness.

13-ISLAMIC RULINGS

Question:

Has Islam designed special laws for the people with regard to the diverse aspects of their lives?

Answer:

Yes, for every situation Islam has designed a law which is precise, succinct and appropriate to the highest degree. So Islam abounds in laws which have a direct bearing on the various stages of a person's life. To prove this you only have to peruse the *Jawahir al-kalam* in jurisprudence[1] which contains almost 60,000 edicts, all accompanied by the evidence that they have been extracted from the following sources: the Holy Qur'an, the *sunna*, the consensus of the religious scholars and man's reason.

Question:

Please give examples of some of the principle sections under which Islamic laws are classified with regard to different aspects of life.

Answer:

They are numerous, for example laws relating to:

1. Transactions between people such as selling, buying, giving a security, renting out and letting.
2. Farming matters relating to the land itself, agriculture and irrigation channels.
3. Legal matters such as those concerning judges, witnesses, advocacy, reconciliation and an individual's rights.
4. Personal affairs like marriage, divorce, separation, inheritance and making a will.
5. Criminal offences like punishment, the death penalty (judicial retaliation) and the payment of blood money.

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[1] See fn. 1, p. 101.

6. Surety, getting a loan, deposits, bank drafts and so on.
7. Peace and war, treaties and all that concerns the affairs of the state.
8. Several categories not mentioned above but which have a direct bearing on the life of an individual.

Question:

How is it possible that these laws which were formulated more than fourteen centuries ago meet the needs and problems of today?

Answer:

We have already said that Islam is the religion that the God of the Universe has sent down so that it may be for all time the religion of mankind and the way man should live his life. God is omniscient and if man-made legal systems take into account the development of the human race, its progress and possible requirements in the future, then is it not more fitting for God to do the same with regard to His laws?

In addition to what has already been said, laws are of two kinds: laws of a specific nature and which are never ever subject to change, such as "alcoholic drink is forbidden"; laws which set out a general principle which can be applied at any time or in any place such as the law that "anything which is capable of producing intoxication is forbidden".

Any development or problem we encounter in today's world, if not covered by a specific law, undoubtedly will fall within the scope of a law which enunciates a general principle, which is then applied to the issue in question either sanctioning it or disallowing it.

Question:

Can you give proof of what you have just said with regard to banks, insurance and arming a country with nuclear weapons?

Answer:

Anyone who has a thorough grounding in the bases of Islamic jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*) could answer this question.

1. A bank is tantamount to a place where a number of separate activities take place concerning which, Islam has clarified its own position and for each of which it has set out a specific law. Such activities include bank drafts, loans, business transactions, deposits and usury.

2. Insurance is covered by God's words in the Holy Qur'an, "O you who believe, fulfill [your] contracts"[*5*: 1] and because insurance does not have any forbidden element, it will be covered accordingly by this principle.

3. An Islamic state arming itself with nuclear weapons, on condition that they are for defence, is covered by God's words, "And make ready against them what force you can [muster]"[*8*: 60].

Numerous other examples can be given where Islamic jurisprudence can be applied to modern developments and phenomena.

14-A LIFE OF HAPPINESS UNDER THE BANNER OF ISLAM

Question:

How can a happy life be found best within Islam?

Answer:

This is clear from the previous chapters of this book but suffice it here to summarize what Islam can provide if Islam is actually applied:

1. A faith devoid of superstition, humbug, exaggeration and aberration and which is consistent with man's innate disposition and capable of clear demonstration.
2. A spirit which is free from malice, spite, enmity and other unpleasant traits and which possesses the qualities of equilibrium, serenity, inner composure and justice.
3. A society which benefits from the world's resources whether they be in the earth, the sea or the air and where such resources are distributed fairly without prejudice, without enriching one race at the expense of another.
4. Knowledge and good health, material well-being, work, civilized development and the promotion of virtue, as a result of which ignorance, illness, poverty, vice, crime, unemployment and decadence will cease to exist.
5. Abundant freedom and giving mankind a sense of dignity and in this context we mention the words of the Almighty in the Holy Qur'an: "And indeed We have honoured the children of Adam, and We have carried them on land and sea, and have nourished them with [all] good things and have preferred them over much We have created, with a marked preference"[*17*: 70].

   And in numerous verses in the Holy Qur'an we read that God has made the universe subservient to mankind. As regards the value of man from the Islamic perspective, suffice it to mention here the Qur'anic verse: "If anyone kills a person not in retaliation for murder or for

spreading turmoil in the land it is as if he has killed all mankind"[*5*: 32].

6. Peace throughout the world and security for all people.
7. Progress for mankind in all the vital fields of human activity.
8. Social justice, whether it be in the affairs of state or among the populace.
9. The faithful discharge by each individual of his duties and the giving to each person what is his due in a straightforward, uncomplicated and honourable fashion.
10. The solution to every kind of problem.

This is a summary of the basic things to which Islam aspires for the fulfilment of a happy life, the likes of which cannot be conceived as existing outside Islam. In addition to this, that which is the source of joy to a person in this life is the good news of a glorious future which will thus make any disaster that may now befall him or her easy to bear.

Consequently, we do not find even among those people who are the most fervent nationalists and patriots, but who do not believe in the hereafter, half the vitality, courage, intrepidity, happiness and equanimity that we find among those who believe in God and the resurrection, and history is the best witness to this.

Finally, we ask God to guide us all so that we may please Him and to Him alone do we turn for help.

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Other Publications by *fountain books*

www.fountaingroup.org

1. *Fundamentals of Islam*

In this book the author outlines the five fundamental principles of Islam, namely Tawheed (the Indivisible Oneness of God), Adl (Divine Justice), Nubowwah (Prophethood), Imamah (Leadership of mankind), and Me'ad (Resurrection). For each principle, the author presents a brief, and to the point, discussion on the significance of the issue concerned. The book could serve as a good introduction to Islamic beliefs.

2. *The Family*

In this book the author highlights the problems he sees both in Islamic societies and in west societies today that arise from the phenomenon of unmarried young men and women, through to birth control and contraception. He surveys the idea of marriage in various religions and schools of thought, and discusses polygamy from the Islamic perspective. As well as being a call to the Muslim world to revert to the true teachings of Islam, this book can also be of use as an introduction to others who seek some answers to the social problems of today. This is because Islam provides detailed teachings that promise success in every area of human life on individual and societal levels, and furthermore the practicality and success of those teachings have been proven in the course of history.

3. *The Qur'an: When was it compiled?*

In this book the author addresses the issues of when the Holy Qur'an was compiled, on what and whose instructions was this task carried out, and who accomplished its compilation in the form that it is available today. In this work the author presents undisputable evidence as to address these crucial questions. Through historical, methodical and logical analyses, the author establishes how and when the compilation of the Holy Qur'an was achieved. In the latter half of the book the author cites many Prophetic traditions (hadith) on the significance of the learning and recitation of Holy Qur'an. It is a must read for every Muslim, and any non-Muslim who follows Islamic issues.

4. *The Bible and Christianity: an Islamic view*

In this work the author carries out a brief investigation into the Bible and presents his findings. They show that some of the most noble men, i.e. the Prophets, who have been chosen by God Almighty as His messengers to mankind, are accused in the Bible to have committed some of the most vile and immoral conducts known to man. Prophets are accused of

deception, lying, fornication, rape, incest, murder, and the list goes on. Even God does not escape unscathed in the Bible . . . false characteristics are attributed to Him, or He is accused of making His messengers to commit foul and disgusting acts.

In the second part of this work the author presents some of the debates he had with the Christians who visited him in his residence in Karbala, Iraq. The debates concerned their impression of Islam and its doctrine as well as their own religious beliefs. In this presentation the author shows how he invited non-Muslims to Islam through calm but rational and intellectual debates with them. The book makes an interesting read, especially when the reader can see the simple arguments put forward in these debates.

5. *If Islam were to be established*

This book can serve as the Muslim's guide to the Islamic government. If an Islamist opposition group has a plan for an Islamic government, this book would help to check various aspects of the plan. In the absence of such a plan, this book would present one. To the non-Muslims, the book presents a glimpse of a typical Islamic system of government. The book would also serve as a yardstick for anyone to check the practices of any government that claims to have implemented an Islamic system of government.

6. *War, Peace and Non-violence: An Islamic Perspective*

In this work the author addresses three controversial issues, which have come to be associated with Islam. Through his extensive knowledge of the teachings of Islam, the author presents the Islamic stand on war, peace and non-violence, as found in the traditions and teachings of the Prophet of Islam, which could serve as exemplary models for the Mankind. Detailed accounts of the traditions of Prophet in his dealings with his foes during war or peace times are presented in this book, which gives the reader a clear insight into the way and the basis upon which the Prophet of Islam used to conduct his affairs in this respect.

7. *The Islamic System of Government*

In this introductory book the author outlines the basic principles of a government based on the teachings of Islam. The author begins with the aim and objectives of the government according to Islam and the extent of its authority in that framework. He then addresses, from the Islamic viewpoint, the significance and fundamental nature of such issues as consultative system of government, judicial system, freedoms, party political pluralism, social justice, human rights, foreign policy, etc. The

author also outlines the policies of a government on issues such as education, welfare, health, crime, services, etc. as well as such matters as the government's income, and authority.

8. Islamic Beliefs for All

In this book the author discusses the five fundamental principles of Islam. These principles are Tawheed or the Indivisible Oneness of God, Adl or Divine Justice, Prophethood, Imamah or the Leadership of mankind after the prophet, and Resurrection. What distinguish this book are the author's subtle approach in addressing the issues concerned and the simple examples given to illustrate the discussion. This authoritative work is not only important to Muslims, but it would also be of interest to those non-Muslims who seek to explore Islam and its doctrine. This easy to read book would be a valuable reference for Religious Education.

9. Husayn - The Sacrifice for Mankind

This is a collection of articles about a totally unique individual who, through his remarkable sacrifices, managed to change the course of history and the direction that mankind was heading for. He is none other than Husayn, the grandson of the Prophet of Islam, Muhammad, and the second son of Fatima and Ali, peace be upon them. Imam Husayn peace be upon him stood up to tyranny and oppression and gave everything he had, including his life and the lives of his most beloved sons and brothers as well as those of his closest allies, in order to awaken the masses, reform society and rectify the distortion that has been inflicted on Islam.

The articles in this work cover some aspects of the aims and objectives of Imam Husayn’s movement, the difference between his strategy and that of his brother Imam Hasan in facing tyranny and despotism, the examples he set, and the lessons that are learnt from the events that lead up to Karbala fourteen centuries ago. Besides the benefits of his movement, the personality of Imam Husayn peace be upon him as reflected by the many hadith and teachings of Prophet Muhammad is also discussed. Also included in this work are a number of questions and answers about the commemoration ceremonies observed by the Muslims around the world on the occasion of Ashura.

10. The rights of prisoners according to Islamic teachings

In general, Islam considers imprisonment as a case of last resort in many circumstances, however, according to Islamic teachings there are only a few offences that would lead to imprisonment. Under non-Islamic system, of course the offender should be reprimanded, but any chastisement

prescribed by Islamic teachings may only be implemented if all the relevant criteria and the preconditions prescribed are also met. If the criteria are not met, then the prescribed punishment may not be executed.

In this book the author addresses such issues as the fundamental nature of freedom, the rights of prisoner, and the harmful effects of imprisonment on the individual concerned as well as on society, and the kind of offences that would lead to imprisonment under an Islamic system. The author also cites a few cases to demonstrate the attitude the Islamic ruler should take towards offence; to try to find reasons to waive the punishments in any particular case. The author also addresses the issue of torture in general, and mental and physical ill treatment that is carried out under the guise of interrogation and extracting confession from a detainee or a suspect.

11. Aspects of the political theory of Imam Shirazi

Muhammad G. Ayub is a well-known Islamist political activist within the Iraqi circle who has established a long history of political struggle over the past three decades. He was attracted by the views of the Imam Muhammad Shirazi in the fields of social and political sciences. This prompted the author to write this book to introduce the reader to these views that have remained relatively unknown amongst Muslim activists and reformists. It covers such aspects on politics as freedom of expression, party-political pluralism and organisation, social justice, peace and non-violence, human rights, consultation system of government, etc.

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Teachings of Islam

www.ImamShirazi.com

A site dedicated to the cause of Islam, Muslims and Mankind

Islam aims to bring about prosperity to all mankind. One of the leading authorities on Islam today, Imam Muhammad Shirazi, calls upon all Muslims to adhere to the teachings of Islam in all domains in order to regain their former glory and the salvation of mankind. These teachings include:

- PEACE in every aspect.
- NON-VIOLENCE in all conducts.
- FREEDOM of expression, belief, etc.
- PLURALISM of political parties.
- CONSULTATIVE System of Leadership.
- The RE-CREATION of the single Muslim nation - without geographical borders, etc. between them, as stated by Allah:

  "This, your community is a single community and I am your Lord; so worship Me."

- The REVIVAL of Islamic brotherhood throughout this nation:

  "The believers are brothers."

- FREEDOM from all the man-made laws, and restrictions as the Qur'an states:

  "... and (Prophet Muhammad) releases them from their heavy burdens and from the shackles that were upon them."

You can email your queries to the website of Imam Shirazi at: **queries@ImamShirazi.com**